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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[BERNARD TOOK HER BY THE WRIST AND DRAGGED HER FORCIBLY DOWN THE STEPS.]

A SECRET SIN.

—30:—

CHAPTER I.

PERA CLIFFORD was the prettiest girl in Blankshire, and she knew it, and regarding her beauty as a "curse," was thinking of its effect—"a lover." She leant over the gate, and looked down the road under the shadow of the beeches, with a smile on her winsome lips, which told of the hope in her heart.

She was dressed very simply in a blue serge, looped up over a striped petticoat, and a sailor hat, with a poppy stuck in its ribbon, hid the brightness of her nut-brown hair. A bunch of keys hanging from her waist-band gave her the appearance of a careful housewife. She considered that these keys increased her importance, and loved to hear them dangling by her side, in spite of the chaffing of her cousin Bernard, who told her they rang an alarm wherever she went.

She flew out at him one day when something had upset her usually superior temper, and told him, with emphasis, that she never

went anywhere in secret, and the whole world was welcome to look on at her doings. He dropped the subject after this, but looked so sulky that she took care to jingle the keys close to his ears in a defiant manner whenever she passed him in her constant flitting to and fro through the rambling house, where she lived and loved, and hoped and feared, through the sunshine and the shadow of her young life.

The present was bright enough, but the shadows are never far off when all a girl's sunshine is embodied in one individual. The individual whom chance or fate had raised so far above his fellow-men in Pera's eyes was, after all, only an ordinary mortal, with a good-looking face, a fine muscular figure, a frank, fearless disposition, and a tongue that had never told a lie.

He was neither a genius nor a hero, and if he did his duty in the life that was set before him he did not brag about it, or set himself up as a saint. But dogs took to him at once, and children made much of him; brother-officers when "in a hole" called to Bertie Vyvyan to help them out; and women

after one look in his honest blue eyes were prone to give their hearts into his keeping. He ought to have been labelled "dangerous," because he did a great deal of harm without intending it. However often, and however eagerly his own heart was besieged, he never surrendered till he met Pera Clifford on the ice at Lavington, and having arrived just in time, one dusky afternoon in December, to save her from death in the freezing water, laid her dripping and exhausted on the bank, with her small head resting on his shoulder, and his true heart placed at her feet.

Ever since that winter's day life had worn a different aspect to the girl. She was a descendant of a noble race who had fought their way to honour and glory through the Wars of the Roses, where many were destined to lose both the one and the other; and having reached the summit of their greatness when the First of the Stuarts was on the throne, they clung to him with old-fashioned fidelity, and lost land and fortune for the sake of the King.

The old, far-famed Castle of Lillingsworth was besieged by Cromwell himself, and was

defended with great bravery by a small band of royalists; but their numbers were too small to make long resistance possible, and after fighting with determined gallantry, when the besiegers were pouring through a breach in the ramparts, Roger de Clifford called to his son to follow him, and escaped through a subterranean passage with most of the survivors. The Castle was well-nigh demolished by Cromwell in his disappointment, and it stands to this day, with its shattered walls and ruined ramparts, a fit emblem of his destructive rage.

It was never rebuilt, for it would have taken the fortune of a Monte Christo to restore it to its former grandeur; and the De Cliffords, when they returned to their ruined home, were sadly in want of funds. The only part of the vast building which was still habitable was an ivy-grown structure called the gatehouse; and there they established themselves, thankful to have a roof over their heads, and a portion of the old wide park and grassland still to call their own.

It was here that Pera was born, and the golden-haired mite would often stray away from all restraining hands, and wander up time-worn steps under half-ruined arches, where an English queen had once feasted or slept, and where now the bats made their home, and the rats and other vermin made fine riot with the shadows fell. Her small, round face, framed in its glory of yellow curls, would look out of some ivied window, peering through its delicate tracery with solemn eyes, seeing heaven knows what in its childish imagination.

Sometimes a boy would come up the stone steps with a spring and a bound, and scatter her fancies with a loud, ringing laugh; but she would turn away at once with a pout, and a shrug of her wilful shoulders, and never cared to share her dreams with her cousin, Bernard Vansittart. She would play with him, and be the Sleeping Beauty to his prince, or Queen Bess to his Leicester, but she kept her fancies to herself, and never told him why she liked to steal away, and sit all alone amongst the crumbling ruins of the past, weaving golden dreams in the cool, quiet shade.

Childhood passed into youth, and he grew grave, whilst she grew merry. When he tried to tell her of his love she would only laugh, and turn it off by vowing she was too old to play at Sleeping Beauty and Charming Prince any longer, and he really must learn to talk like a rational mortal, and not like a grown-up child. He was not given to be sentimental, so he could easily bury his love deep down in the recesses of his heart, like the skeleton was said to be hidden in the depths of the dungeon in the round tower; but, unlike the skeleton, he meant it to come out one day, and he had made up his mind that the girl would not have the power or the wish to resist it.

A light came into Pera's eyes as she heard a quick, resolute step coming down the road. But, seized with a sudden shyness, she did not go forward to meet the one whom she expected; but, taking off her hat, made a pretence of being so engrossed in arranging the flower which she had placed in the ribbon that she had no idea he was coming.

"Well, Pera, looking out for me, I declare," said the voice of her cousin, as Bernard Vansittart walked up to the gate with a flush on his eager face.

"Don't you flatter yourself," she answered, pettishly, as her heart sank in bitter disappointment. "I've been busier than the most hard-worked bee, and I came out for a breath of air to refresh me."

"Here's something better than mere fresh air," and he smiled, as he lent his folded arms on the top rail of the gate, and looked down into her pretty face.

"Where?" looking straight over his shoulder.

"Isn't a cousin better than most things?"

"No; a friend's ever so much better," with a twinkle in her eyes. "A friend's raspberry jam, a cousin only bread-and-butter."

"Exactly; jam's all very well every now and then, but no one gets tired of bread-and-butter," looking as triumphant as if he had made a point at whist.

"A friend's poetry, a cousin prose," she answered, with a pout.

"Prose is the language of daily life, poetry an accidental flight of the imagination. We could get on very well without any verses, but if prose were vanished we should all be dumb."

"Do you know you are talking like a book?"

"I'm talking masculine common sense, and you feminine rubbish."

"Thanks," dropping him a curtsy. "Is it common sense to be rude?"

"Nonsense! Fancy standing on ceremony with a cousin!"

"Fancy standing on anything else!" in breathless indignation, as the colour rushed into her face, and her eyes flashed with anger.

A cold, calm smile curled his thin lips.

"It's delicious to get a rise out of you," he said, slowly.

No answer.

He pulled out his watch.

"A quarter to seven!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "May I inquire if you are going to have any dinner to-day?"

"I think we are; but not just yet. If you want to talk to papa," opening the gate, "I won't detain you."

"But aren't you coming in to dress?"

"There's no hurry," shutting the gate as soon as he had passed through, and resuming her former position.

"How dearly you love a scramble!"

"Perhaps there's something else I love still better," with a low, sweet laugh.

He stopped, and looked back at her with an air of perplexity.

"I believe you are waiting for something."

"I'm waiting for you to go."

"That's rude."

"Oh, no; you are a cousin!"

"Pera, I don't understand you to-day."

"As if you ever did," tossing back her head in joyous defiance. "Do go in and talk to papa," in sudden impatience, as she caught the sound of horse's hoofs in the distance.

"You seem in a great hurry to get rid of me," he said, humbly, as he made his way slowly towards the ancient Tudor arch which formed the doorway to the Gatehouse.

She did not deny it, as she listened eagerly to those hoofs in the distance, but as they came nearer she set the gate open, and then ran to take up her place under the arch, so conscious of her eagerness that she was obliged to feign indifference.

The next minute Bertie Vyvyan was off his horse, and holding her small hand in his, and her brown eyes were shining with hope and happiness.

CHAPTER II.

BERNARD VANSITTART had been puzzled and uneasy when he went into the Gatehouse, and his wilful little cousin remained outside in the yard. Now, as he sat at table with the good-looking soldier opposite to him, he was no longer puzzled, but he was uneasy than ever.

Pera was not her light-hearted, saucy self, and she wore in the front of her simple white dress a faded cyclamen, which seemed to have some strange influence over her mood.

It was not a flower which grew in Mr. Clifford's garden, and he noticed that whenever she looked down at it a soft smile hovered about her lips, which seemed to him full of significance.

He resolved to see if it had any special value for her, and directly after dinner went into the garden and picked a rose, which he gave to her, saying,—

"Your flowers are so deplorable that I've fetched you something else."

"Very kind, but wear it yourself," holding it out to him.

"That I won't; but give me that faded thing and I'll throw it away."

She shrank back as he put out his hand as if to take it.

"I—I don't want to throw it away," she said, with a hesitation that was very unusual in her.

"Nonsense; it's quite dead," with his customary persistence. "You can't possibly want it," very nearly touching its delicate head with his long, lean fingers.

"It will revive in hot water."

"Not worth the trouble. If you've a fancy for them, I'll order a bunch from Covent-garden."

"I don't care for bought flowers."

"Mine would be given."

"But they would come out of a shop, and the dirtiest of fingers might have picked them."

"Quite right, Miss Clifford," said Bertie Vyvyan, interrupting his talk with her father.

"One flower picked in a friend's garden is worth a dozen five guinea bouquets."

"Especially when it looks like a limp rag," and Vansittart sneered.

Bertie looked at him with an air of quiet amusement twinkling in his eyes.

"Ah! I see you are above sentiment."

"My cousin is the apostle of common sense," said Pera, cheerfully.

"Certainly I prefer it to arrant nonsense," drily.

"Now I don't," with an air of reflective wisdom, feeling that she was bound to contradict him.

"I never supposed you did," in a tone of suppressed irritation.

"You can't have made it attractive."

"I had nothing to do with it. You go your way, and I go mine."

"Yes, you stride on in front, and blow me up if I don't follow you."

"You never attempt it," with his nose in the air.

"I wouldn't if I were you, Miss Clifford," said Bertie, in his laziest of tones. "A guide who is worth the name sticks to you like a leech."

"Don't put that into his head," with a comic look of dismay.

"Don't be alarmed, I am not going to alter my plan of action because Mr. Vyvyan doesn't understand its principle."

"I am going up to the ruins," said Pera, abruptly. "You can all find me when you like."

"I'd rather not trust to chance;" and Bertie Vyvyan went to the door to open it for her. "Is there any law against my coming with you?"

"None at all. Bernard will stay and talk to papa,"—an arrangement which brought an angry frown to Vansittart's brows.

In silence Pera Clifford led the way down the narrow path, bordered by a quickset hedge on either side to the gate which led on to the grassy slope crowned by the towers of the oldest part of Lillingworth Castle.

The moon was just rising behind a clump of beeches, and the glow of the sunset still lingered in the west, giving a touch of warmth and beauty to the tops of the trees, and the ruddy brown earth of the fields.

They strolled about in quiet enjoyment, not talking much, because the hearts of both were full, but with a sense of happiness within disturbed by no worldly forethought or conventional prejudice.

The crowd of tourists who generally haunted the castle had gone away with the daylight, and these two had donjon, keep, banquet hall, crumbling stair, and ruined turret to themselves.

"Here Leicester made love to Elizabeth, whilst Amy Robsart broke her heart."

"After all, she had the pull over Queen Bess, for he never cared a straw for the queen."

"That made it all the worse. Who would

care to be loved and given up?" looking out over the wide landscape with dreamy eyes, as she sat down on the moss-grown rampart of one of the highest towers.

"Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

"I don't agree to that—unless he died," she added, thoughtfully.

"That is the only way in which you could do it. Think, Miss Clifford," his voice vibrating, "supposing I were spoons on a girl like yourself, and you—I mean she," hastily correcting himself, and flushing hotly in the twilight, "liked me just as much in return, and we met often, just like this"—sitting down by her side, and bending over her—with only the jackdaws to listen, and no troublesome cousin to interfere. "I'm only supposing, you know," as she shrank shyly from the glowing look in his eyes. "Wouldn't it be better to have a few hours like that of life, even if I died the sooner, than to go on like a Methuselah, with no more heart than a jelly-fish?"

"But why talk of dying?" she said, in a low voice.

"Because it seems to me such happiness would be too great for earth," his voice unsteady under his heavy moustaches.

And then there was silence between them—such silence as was far more eloquent than a thousand words, for heart spoke to heart in throbbing pulses and lowered lashes.

Pera sat with clasped hands and drooping neck, waiting in a dream of joy. Would he go further still and ask her to be his wife? She did not wish it—she was quite content. The knowledge that he loved her was all-sufficing; the rest would come later on, when the light of day would be let in on her hallowed secret, and her joy known to the world.

"Pera, get up at once," cried Bernard Vansittart, imperiously, as he came up the turret-stair. "That rampart isn't safe, and I've told you so a thousand times."

"Don't disturb yourself," said Bertie, calmly. "As long as Miss Clifford is under my charge I can answer for her safety."

"I'm afraid your answering for it would do no good; a little knowledge of the place would be more satisfactory."

"I don't believe there is the smallest danger."

"There is danger—I know it, if you don't."

"Come and see the nice little hole where Leicester put the people whom he wanted to get rid of," said Pera, anxious to prevent a quarrel, and not caring to stay any longer now that Bernard had come and interrupted them.

Both the men followed her light steps as she flitted on before them in the moonlight. Her white dress looked ghostly; her pretty face, as she glanced over her shoulder at Vyvyan, might have been that of Amy Robsart herself before faith was gone and her heart was broken; and the young soldier felt that he could play the part of Leicester at the beginning of his courtship to perfection if only this detestable cousin were out of the way.

Disdaining any assistance, Pera mounted some rough steps formed by blocks of stone which had fallen out of their proper niches, and held up her hand in sign of warning.

"One false step, and you will go where no one could follow you. Look," bending over the edge, which was defended by a bar with iron spikes to prevent adventurous tourists from losing their lives as well as their hats, "the walls are five feet thick, so not a sound could be heard outside them. There is no window and no door, and it is so deep that we can't see the floor. It is no better than a grave, only with a little more space to struggle in. Perhaps the struggle would last all the longer if that would be any advantage. I doubt it. I would rather die at once than after a few days of misery and black despair."

"Don't go so near the edge," said Bernard, gazing down into the darkness as if it had a

peculiar fascination for him. "Once fall in, and you'll never get out."

"Would no one come after me?"

"What would be the use of it? There would be only two deaths instead of one," remarked the cousin with more sense than sentiment.

"You wouldn't be long alone," said Vyvyan in a low voice, but Vansittart's sharp ears caught the words.

"Don't you believe him, Pera. Nothing would draw a man down there—not even you. Come away," with a slight shudder; "it's a beastly hole, full of suggestions," and he stood aside to let her pass.

"Suggestions!" with a look of surprise. "Oh! I suppose you mean ghosts? I really thought I heard something move."

"We are too many for the ghosts," said Bertie; "but, I daresay, if you come up here alone at midnight you would see a white figure stalking about in search of Leicester."

"Catch Pera coming near it!" cried Bernard, derisively. "If a mouse squeaked she would go into hysterics."

"I'll come to-night—this very night," setting her lips firmly, and making up her mind to it with a great effort.

"And so will I!" said Bertie, who had never shown such an interest in ghosts before. "My uncle belongs to the Psychological Research Society, and if I see anything, and send him a budget, he'll put me down for a thumping legacy."

"My uncle," rejoined Bernard, with emphasis, "bases himself about something better than ghosts; and I should like to see his face when he hears of his daughter proposing a midnight assignation."

Pera's white cheeks flushed like a sudden sunset, but she answered, coldly,—

"My only assignation was with a ghost, and Mrs. Grundy herself couldn't see impropriety in a thing that couldn't blush."

"I did not know Mr. Vyvyan was so brazen," with a sneer.

"Mr. Vyvyan isn't a ghost."

"Not just yet, thank you."

"But he may be before long," said Bernard, gloomily, as he stood still, and looked back at the tower they had just left, with a strange glow in his deep-set eyes.

Bertie shrugged his broad shoulders as they walked on, and left Vansittart to brood alone.

"Your cousin is desperately anxious to send me to shadowland; but if I go first I shall come back and fetch you. Would you be ready, Pera?" lowering his voice, and looking down into her upturned face.

Crimson blushes rose to her cheeks, as she turned her head away.

"I don't know, Mr. Vyvyan."

"It would be better to live together here, wouldn't it? His tone low and soft as a woman's. He stretched out his hand, and took hers into his and clasped it tight. "I'm a poor man, Pera—"

"You are catching cold as fast as you can," said an impatient voice behind them, which made them start audder and flush guiltily.

Vyvyan muttered an oath and turned on Vansittart angrily, but the girl fled into the house, her cheeks burning and her young heart beating fast with love and fear.

CHAPTER III.

"Do you approve of Pera wandering about the Castle at dead of night?" asked Bernard, with some acidity in his tone, as he threw himself into a quaintly carved chair which belonged to the days of Queen Bess.

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Roger, looking up in grave surprise from a time-worn manuscript which he was studying by the light of an old-fashioned lamp. "Pera wouldn't do such a thing if her life depended on it."

"But this time she will have the advantage of an escort, and the ghost is sure to keep out

of the way, for he'll know that two's company and three's none."

Sir Roger frowned.

"Pera knows that I shouldn't allow such a thing. Get to bed, child, and the young men can do as they like. If you care for a cigar, Vyvyan, I recommend those in that ebony cabinet. You might give them to him," with a glance at his daughter.

She went to the cabinet, as desired, and Vyvyan followed, protesting that he was distressed at giving her so much trouble. Apparently the box of Havannahs was very hard to see, for their two heads came very close together, and there was a good deal of talk in lowered voices.

Bernard cleared his throat, and rustled the paper which he had taken up, but neither hint had the smallest effect; and when the cigar was finally found and selected Vera dropped a kiss on her father's forehead, and went straight to the old oak door, which Bertie thought it necessary to open for her, and vanished up the slippery oaken staircase without one thought for the cousin who was watching her, though her pretty face turned round with a smile, and two pair of eyes met in a long, loving look ere she finally disappeared.

The winding stair which led up to the eastern turret to the bedroom on the third floor, which Pera had long ago chosen for her own because it looked out upon her beloved ruins, with nothing to intercept the view, was lighted by the moon which shone through the deep-silled windows.

She had come upstairs with the obedience of a child, but there her obedience ended. Her mind was in a whirl, her brain far too excited to think or sleep, so what was the use of laying her restless little head on the pillow?

She took off her dress, and after wrapping herself in a simple white dressing-gown let down her glorious brown hair in clouds of beautiful curls about her shoulders, and seated herself on the sill of the open window, with a feeling of expectation upon her, as if she had something to wait for. What the something was she could not tell, but she looked out on the old towers of ruddy stone with a vague longing in her eyes.

Beyond the green slope there was a belt of trees, which bounded what was formerly the tilt-yard, where swords had clashed, and lances splintered, and many a good horse or its master had died whilst Beauty looked on with fear in her heart and love in her eyes—all in the olden time.

There was no waving of plumes or ringing sound of trumpets now. All was still, and the trees cast their shadows on the silent sward, and the moon sailed on through the shimmering sky just as calmly and impassively as in the days when tragedy stalked hand in hand with pleasure, and the joyous laughter of the morning changed too often into the sob of sorrow before the sun went down.

Pera was not thinking of the past to-night; the present was all too vividly engrossing. A new charm had come to her life, and raised it as far above the common-place as the stars were far above the highest turret of the Gate-house.

She had no experience of past flirtations to take the charm off this new and wonderful delight.

It was not her way to sit down and analyse her feelings like a young surgeon in the dissecting-room. She only knew that when Vyvyan was with her a new happiness came with every word that fell from his lips, every look that flashed from his honest blue eyes. No thought of marriage was in her heart—marriage that would take her from her idolised father.

She could not have contemplated that without a blush or a shiver; but she was quite content to let things rest as they were, with Vyvyan coming over from Warburton whenever he could get leave, like a flash of sunlight across her path.

If only Bernard would go away before the two men quarrelled! Although she had known

cousin ever since her earliest childhood she felt that he was still a closed book to her. There were moods in which she did not understand him in the least—moods which frightened her somewhat when a child; but they alarmed her still more now that there was someone who might be harmed by him.

She must do her best to keep them apart for the future, or, perhaps, her dear old father would give Bernard a hint that he must keep his animosity within bounds, or else himself out of the way. That would be better.

Sir Roger was generally buried alive in his books, but he was always ready to rouse himself at any suggestion from his daughter; and she made up her mind to speak to him to-morrow.

Her anxiety being set at rest by the thought of her father, who never failed her, she fell asleep, her brown head resting against the window, framed in trembling ivy, the moonlight falling softly across her hands, loosely folded, and the faded cyclamen pinned close to her young heart.

The sound of angry voices roused her with a start, and she sprang to her feet in the sudden terror which comes from nightmare.

Was it nightmare? She thrust her head out of the window, and saw two forms crossing the grass. Every now and then they stopped as if in eager conversation; and as she craned her neck to see. She saw the one start back, the other throw himself upon him.

They were just close to the wall of Caesar's Tower, and as they swayed backwards and forwards, and her heart stopped still with fear, they moved a little further, and the corner of the massive wall hid them both from sight.

She waited with wide open eyes and parted lips, her hands clasped tight together, paralysed with fear, a deadly coldness creeping up her back, every sense concentrated in the effort to listen.

There was not a sound except the cry of a jackdaw startled from his slumbers. What and startled him?

He came straight from the part called Caesar's Tower, where the moon was shining through the deep arches of the lofty windows.

Close to the spot where the jackdaw had made his nest was the gloomy dungeon where Leicester paid off old scores on his enemies if fate threw them into his hands. But the bird, after flying here and there, settled on a distant tower, and did not go back to it.

What was there to keep him from it? Why should the two men in the midst of their struggle go there to end their quarrel?

Her lips grew white, her hands were like ice. Now, whilst she was waiting there, idle and useless, murder might be done. Men's passions were just the same now as in the days of Leicester, and these two had already come to blows.

When the sun rose in the morning it would be too late to interfere. If evil was to be done the evil would have happened, and a curse might have fallen, which neither time nor tears could ever remove.

She ran to the door, and, urged on by the terror which had seized her, hurried down the dark stairs, and undid the heavy door with trembling hands.

There was neither bolt nor bar to stop her—both were undone. With feet that scarcely touched the ground she sped down the path, and out on to the grass. There was not a sound to be heard but her own panting breath, which came in gasps.

The ruins looked weird and desolate, and at another time she would have remembered the ghosts which were said to haunt them, and gone back home with a shiver; but now both love and fear were dragging her on, and she had no room for thought of self.

Cold and white was the light of the moon, and even the tufts of wallflower which had forced its way through the clefts in the walls were plainly visible.

Alone she stood in what had once been the banqueting-hall, and looked round. Not a

soul was to be seen. The silence of death reigned over the whole place. Was it all a mistake—a dream?

She tossed back her hair and listened. Such a feeling of awe came over her that she could scarcely keep herself from running away, and she could not have spoken to save her life. The tension of her nerves was so great that the slight noise of a loose stone falling from its place nearly made her heart leap into her mouth.

She could bear it no longer. Evidently the others had ended their quarrel, and gone home. It would be nice to be safe within the four walls of her own room, but there was something she must do first. She must take one look at that terrible place about which they had jested that evening.

An instinct which she could not understand led her on to the Keep. Slowly she put one timid foot on the first rough stone of the steps that led to it, and then the other on the next.

She longed to go back, but was irresistibly drawn on. Still no sound but her own heart, which seemed to be hammering in her ears. Perhaps she would see the ghost. The next moment a cold dew came out on her forehead, and her teeth chattered in spite of the warmth of this month of June, but she forced herself to go on, until she stood on the edge of the yawning gulf, and then a hoarse, inarticulate cry broke from her, and she clung to the rough surface of the wall to keep herself from falling.

A man was there close by her looking down into the darkness, with his head on one side, as if in the act of listening—listening to what?

He started violently, and nearly fell over the edge into the gruesome pit at that sudden cry behind him. Recovering his balance he turned quickly, and she saw the face of Bernard Vansittart—ghastly white in the moonlight.

"Pera!"

This was no time to stand on ceremony or make pretence. She took a step forward, and said, hoarsely,—

"Where is Mr. Vyvyan?"

"Come away from here!" he said, in a low voice, with a furtive glance into that hollow abyss by his side. "This is no place for you!"

"Where is he?" with a gasp of terror.

"Who—Vyvyan?" passing his hand over his forehead. "How can I tell? I'm not his keeper!"

"But you must! I won't stir till I know!" standing straight in front of him in her desperate fear.

"Curse him!" he cried, fiercely, and then he took her by the wrist, and dragged her forcibly down the steps, whilst a cry of horror burst from her lips, and rang through the desolate ruin.

(To be continued.)

HEALTHFULNESS OF LEMONS.—Very many people know the benefit of lemonade before breakfast, but few know that it is more than double by taking another at night also. The way to get the better of the bilious system without blue pills or quinine is to take the juice of one, two or three lemons, as appetite craves, in as much ice water as makes it pleasant to drink with sugar, before going to bed. In the morning, on rising, at least a half hour before breakfast, take the juice of one lemon in a goblet of water. This will clear the system of bile with efficiency, without any of the weakening effects of calomel or mineral water. People should not irritate the stomach by eating lemons clear; the powerful acid of the juice, which is always most corrosive, invariably produces inflammation after a while, but, properly diluted, so that it does not burn nor draw the throat, it does its medical work without harm, and, when the stomach is clear of food, has an abundant opportunity to work over the system thoroughly.

A FLOWER OF FATE.

CHAPTER XX.

If it had not been for a vague, yet strangely strong feeling that in some way her brother would need her, Madge would have left Moretown Hall for awhile during the period of the theatricals, and have gone to Bentley to stay with Amy and her mother.

But Sir Keith's face alone, even if she had not been the unwilling hearer of the truth from Lady Anice's lips that day in the library, would have stayed her.

She busied herself to do many a little act of thoughtfulness for the brother who was so tender to her, and heedless of Lady Anice's sneers and studied insults she held her way quietly. The Countess de Ganyani and her daughter were reckoned delightful by the rest of the guests, and none knew that their presence was unwelcome to their host, so courteous was he towards them.

Madge kept carefully aloof from all the preparations for the theatricals; she had no desire to be much in her frivolous sister-in-law's company, and preferred solitude to the chatter and flirtation that prevailed. Most of the men secretly deplored her absence; there was something so sweet, refreshing and thoughtful about her, she won all their hearts.

The Countess tried hard to make friends with her whilom stepdaughter, but Madge was no hypocrite, and she received all advances in a frigidly polite manner, which aggravated Lady Anice beyond words.

One day Sir Keith's wife met his sister in the grounds.

"Still industrious, Miss Lorraine? I beg your pardon, Mrs. Watson," she sneered, seeing Madge's gardening gloves, basket, and scissors. "I am afraid you find it very dull here without your customary life of excitement and theatre work?"

"I am happy to be with my brother."

Lady Anice laughed shortly at the quiet reply.

"A new brother just found; your affections take root easily."

"Yes, and they stay till the end, Lady Anice; believe me, I am no vane."

Lady Anice bit her lip and frowned.

What did the girl mean. Was it a hint that she saw the flagrant flirtation that was progressing between the Prince de Boules and her brother's wife? Anice felt nervous for a moment; she did not wish any domestic wrath to come and spoil her pleasure.

"Nor am I," she answered, as she picked a rose and cruelly pulled it to pieces, watching Madge's face as she continued, "did you mean anything by that remark, Madge?"

Madge flushed. This was the very first time her brother's wife had spoken her name or addressed her gently.

"You must remember I have had no such worldly experience to teach me as you, and I have always been a spoiled child," Lady Anice went on, seeing to her satisfaction how easily she could work on this girl's feelings. "Very, very often I am afraid I appear heartless. Now confess, don't I?"

Madge sighed.

"I have no right to judge you; but oh! Anice, I beseech you, don't play with Keith's feelings. Perhaps he does love you more than you do him, but be patient with him, and don't give him more pain than you can help."

Lady Anice threw away her rose leaves.

"Has Keith been complaining to you?" she asked, with a smile that was very forced.

"No—no—indeed he has not. Keith is too proud to speak of such a thing, even to me, his sister. I judge him by his face."

"I must look at it when I return; perhaps I shall learn from it," Anice laughed, shortly.

"Au revoir, don't work too hard, and come down to dinner to-night; you must be dull alone."

A frown gathered on her face as she walked

away; she longed at that instant to strike Madge, who had dared to hint even that she caused Keith pain.

"He is a sentimental fool," she thought, viciously. "Good Heavens, I can't stand this sort of thing very long. I shall have to speak a few plain words and tell him the truth, that I never cared a halfpenny for him, and that he bores me."

Madge stood gazing after her.

"Have I done good?" she sighed, "I hope so. She spoke almost kindly, and yet—yet I mistrust her."

She went on with her work, thinking of her brother sadly, and of Rex with a thrill of passionate tenderness.

"If I could see him once more," she said to herself, "he would comfort me."

Then glancing away in the distance she saw her brother's tall, handsome form with the fairy, dainty one of Lady Anice nestling almost fondly to his arm.

"Yes, I have done good after all," she thought; "perhaps she is only thoughtless, not heartless, as I have grown to think her. Heaven grant it for Keith's sake. How he loves her. His face positively beams as though all the clouds were gone just because she smiles on him."

It was true. Sir Keith had met his wife just as she was moving away from Madge, and with that coquetry that was so easy to her she had succeeded in vanishing for the time all doubt and pain from his heart.

Worldly wisdom urged her to this course; she had no desire to have an open quarrel with her husband, especially just at the present moment, so she drifted back to her old self, though her thoughts were very far from being pleasant ones towards him.

Madge determined to meet Anice in her new mood, so clothed herself in one of the many handsome black dresses Sir Keith had given her; and looking an angel of purity in her soft widow's cap, descended to the drawing-room for dinner that night.

She was welcomed most warmly by one and all, though Lady Anice frowned, as she saw the admiration produced by her sister-in-law's undoubted loveliness.

As Madge stood at one of the windows the Prince de Boules approached her.

"You remind me of the poet's lines madam," he murmured, in a low whisper.

"Oh! thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

Madge looked at him keenly.

"I am not used to compliments, your highness," she replied, distinctly; "nor do I like them."

He drew back and bowed, though he wore an air of vexation.

"I forgot," he said, softly, "I will not offend again."

He leaned back against the window and contemplated her sweet fair face with a look of such ardent admiration that Madge blushed beneath his dark passionate eyes.

The gong sounding came as a pleasant relief. But that relief was short lived.

"Mine is the happiness," said the Prince, and he held out his arm with another bow.

She took it reluctantly.

"Why are you so cold and silent to me?" he asked, as they were seated at the table.

Madge was silent. She was no sophist; from the first she had disliked this man—nay, strange as it may seem, she even regarded him with dread.

The Prince watched her carefully and eagerly from beneath his dark eyelashes.

"I see," he went on, softly, "you are no dissembler. You do not like me, madam; I am unfortunate, but let me try to win your regard. Tell me how can I hope to become your friend?"

Madge smiled faintly.

"I am chary in making new friends, Prince, I cling to my old too well."

"By Heaven, she is lovelier than the stars,"

was the muttered thought in the man's breast.

"But," went on the girl, feeling that she had been almost discourteous, "if you care to be a good acquaintance of mine, I beg you to discard the compliments with which you have hitherto garnished your conversation to me."

"You command, I obey."

And thereupon he began to discuss things in general. His voice was pleasant and musical; he was well read, well versed in art. Gradually they got deep in an argument, in which, despite herself, Madge found an attraction in this man, and she chatted easily, heedless of the smile on the Countess de Ganyani's face, or the frown on Lady Anice's.

The jealousy and wrath of the latter at this moment fanned into life the dormant love that had been awakened at last in Anice Moreton's selfish heart.

As she had tortured many a man, so now did she suffer as she saw the Prince lost to everything but Madge, and knew that she had no power to alter this.

Madge was pained beyond words at her coolness in the drawing-room, but sat listening to Blanche Ganyani's girlish chatter, and tried to forget her sister-in-law's pointed rudeness.

She was not destined to retire that night without further pain.

When the men came in, with one accord they all entreated her to sing.

The Prince was the most impressive.

"As a reward for my good conduct," he pleaded, and so Madge consented.

"Will you play my accompaniment?" she asked Blanche.

The Countess's daughter rose at once.

"I must first take off my bangles, they rattle so," she said, as she secured herself.

Madge idly took up one of the ornaments, a gold band, with a sapphire and diamonds sunk in it.

"How pretty!" she exclaimed.

A deep blush dyed Blanche Ganyani's face, and her mother, who was near, laughed softly.

"That? Yes, it is pretty," Blanche replied.

"Rex Darnley sent that to me just before he started with Lord Vivian."

"And you would sooner lose your eyes than that bangle, eh, Blanche?" laughed the Countess.

An icy band seemed to close over Madge's heart. She clasped the bracelet between fingers that burned with the sudden pain she endured, then by one mighty effort she put it down, and turned over a page of the music-book.

"I will sing this," she said, clearly.

"Delightful! I have longed to hear you, dear Mrs. Watson," exclaimed the Countess, blandly. "Rex has spoken of you to us so much—has he not, Blanche?"

Madge saw the girl's face flush again.

"Yes, mamma," was all she said, but the hesitation, the blush, was enough for Madge.

"False! Rex false, too! Oh, Heaven, I can't believe it!" was the cry of her heart, as Blanche played the prelude to her song.

Then calling up her pride she opened her lips, and sang—with a wail of pathos, a depth, a sweetness, which had never come to her before.

A hushed murmur of applause followed, in which the Countess's voice was loudest, and Madge moved away from the piano, and stood at an open window to let the cool breeze play on her hot eyes and freshen her fainting spirit.

"False! Rex false!"

The hideous meaning of the words rang tumultuously in her ears. She put one slender hand on the oaken window ledge to support herself, experiencing at this moment a return of the old bitterness she had felt so often in the past.

"If it be true," ran her thoughts, "if he should love her, how shall I bear it? What shall I do? Rex, if I could only see you, ask you, believe me if it were for your happiness

I would sacrifice my own; but you are silent, you do not send me even one line!"

She sighed a short, quick sigh; and then, as the remembrance of Blanche's confusion and blush returned, she felt that her fear, her pain, must indeed be real.

"Henceforth," she said, bitterly to herself, "I will trust no man, believe in no one. I would as soon have dreamed nature a fraud as that Rex was false."

A shiver passed over her, her eyes closed. She heard the babble of voices from the room in a dull, confused way, and then she was conscious that someone was standing beside her, fanning her gently.

"You are better?" asked Prince de Boules, very gently.

He stood so that no one could see the girl's pale face.

"I was just coming to speak to you, and saw in an instant you were ill. You are better now?"

"Yes; the heat tired me, that was all."

He continued fanning her, and Madge could not but recognise the delicacy and kindness that prompted him to shield her from the many inquisitive eyes around.

"You are very kind," she murmured.

"It has been exceptionally sultry to-day, madam," was the reply given.

But as he gazed at the sweet, troubled face the Italian's heart beat fast.

"It is no heat that caused her faint. I saw her wince at that man's name. Ah! but my dainty Anice is clever, and the girl's confusion was tainted to a nicety. How she must love him! *Sacristi!* he is to be envied, this cold, sneering Englishman. I have never met a woman I could love as I could this one."

Ignorant of the current of thought running in his breast Madge smiled at him.

"I see you are determined to win my friendship, Prince?" she said, gently.

"I desire nothing better than to serve you, when you can bring yourself to trust me, madam."

"Do you believe in friendship?"

The man smiled at the sudden question.

"I am afraid I believe in nothing; but, then I have seen life!"

"And nothing lasts?"

"Nothing lasts. Human love is like a flower, picked to-day, dead before night. You may try to revive it how you will; it never returns to its former self."

In her present mood this philosophy fitted Madge too well.

"It is sad," she said, bitterly.

"All truths are sad."

The Prince shut the fan, and leaned back against the opposite corner of the window.

Each moment that he spoke to this girl was as fuel to the flame of passionate love rising in his heart—love such as he had never felt before; it was so strong and pure.

Before either could speak again the Countess de Ganyani swept up to them.

"Dear Mrs. Watson," she said, sweetly, laying one jewelled hand on Madge's shoulders, "I bring a petition; will you sing again?"

"The night is so hot, it may fatigue you," broke in the Prince, hurriedly.

Madge felt that the woman's dark eyes were searching her through and through. Had she consulted her own feelings she would have refused and left the crowd for her own room and the misery of her thoughts, but her pride was powerful; her delicate nature shrank from giving this woman even a clue to her real feelings.

"With pleasure. I am rested now, thank you. Perhaps Mlle. Ganyani will accompany me again."

And with a smile to the Prince she left them.

As they stood alone the face of the Countess changed.

"What is the meaning of this tomfoolery?" she asked, swiftly.

"What tomfoolery?"

"You know what I mean. This was not in

our bargain. Why are you not by Lady Anice's side?"

"She bores me."

The Countess stamped her foot.

"Beware, Paul; remember all you owe to me. Draw back from your promise now, and I expose you to—well, to those whom even your strong nature may shrink from meeting. It will be a question of cold steel then, *mon ami*."

The Prince shivered slightly.

"I have forgotten nothing," he said, gloomily, "nor am I going back from my bargain."

"Then, why stand gaping at that girl as though you loved her beyond anything this world holds! Do you not see how angry our dear hostess looks?"

There certainly was a shade of ill-temper on Lady Anice's face.

The Prince smiled.

"I thought a little jealousy a good ingredient to introduce about now."

The woman glanced at him swiftly, and then laughed, softly.

"You understand now?" he asked.

"Thoroughly. I ask your pardon, Paul. I should have remembered your usual cunning."

"I am afraid, Helene, I shall never instil any confidence in you."

"*Ma foi*, no. I trust no one; but come, we must not stand here longer. Go to Lady Anice; waste no more time. I am hungry for my revenge, Paul. I shall be happy when I see Keith Moretown a man without a hope or joy in life left. Then he will perhaps repent his boyish insolence to me, and the triumph he held at that time."

"And the sister—what of her? Is she to be included in this revenge?"

The Prince stroked his moustache, and spoke almost indifferently.

The Countess de Ganyani smiled.

"Blanche must marry Rex Darnley," was all she said, as she swept her silken train away.

The man stood silent for a few minutes in the window niche.

"Curse the day I got in her power," he mused, savagely. "She is a hard task-mistress, never so loathsome to me as now that my heart is full of love for this sweet girl."

He turned his eyes out on to the moonlit sward, and listened to Madge's tender voice, then, as it ended, he shook himself.

"*Basta!*" he said, inwardly; "after all I am a fool. Helene can denounce me to the secret council, and then—well, my life is not worth an hour's purchase. Things are not so bad, and I suppose I ought to feel honoured at the very open preference shown towards me by my hostess. A little more skilful management, and if I mistake not, the fair Anice will come to my hand when I whistle for her, despite her callous, selfish heart!"

And with this reflection the Prince de Boules sauntered slowly across the room to the side of his host's wife, whose pretty face showed the pleasure which his presence brought.

"Is Sir Keith blind or mad?" whispered one lady guest to another.

Sir Keith was neither, but he possessed as yet boundless belief in his wife's purity and innocence, and so saw nothing of what was so apparent to all in his house.

Madge after her second song made a quiet escape; she could endure it no longer. The sight of that bangle with its flashing jewels seemed to mock at her misery. She went slowly up the stairs till she reached her own room.

Once there she sank on her knees by the open window and gazed into the clear, translucent sky, glistening with its gemlike stars.

"Nothing lasts! Ah! yes, yes! My love for you, Rex, will last for ever. Though you may, must have grown weary of me, I shall never weary of you. The memory of the love you

once gave me, dear, will be all I shall have. Still nothing will change; I am yours till death!"

(To be continued.)

BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE next week passed slowly and drearily at Temple Dene. Mr. Spragg lay in state in the house which had been his home for but a short time. All were sorry for him, high and low, rich and poor. Many acts of kindness to his poorer tenants came to light now that he was gone, passed away, out of reach of praise or censure, kindness or indifference.

He had been a generous, easy-going landlord, lavish and considerate as any blue-blooded aristocrat could be, and had never refused anything to his tenants, either in the way of improvements or forgiving them their rent.

So the common people came and brought their offering of flowers, and gazed at the still form, and passed out to make room for others who wished to stare at the murdered man.

Opal was persuaded not to see him after death. The expression on his face, and his general aspect, was calculated to shock a sensitive nature. There was a look of horror about the half-closed eyes, a ghastliness about the darkened nostrils and pallid lips that, stiff and rigid, showed the great teeth, and made them more horrible, and gave a more frightful appearance to the whole face than it had borne in life.

She yielded to advice of her friends, and did not go to see the husband whom living she had loathed, and who dead she regretted most bitterly, reproaching herself with her want of love and affection towards him, as she recalled his patience under her indifference, his never-failing solicitude for her welfare, and the unbounded wealth of love he had given her, which she had rejected, and passed over with icy coldness.

She could not help it, she had been powerless to train her feelings as they should have gone, and yet—and yet how she wished now matters had been on a different footing between them! The remorse and regret would never quite leave her.

She did not rejoice that she was free, that Death with his sickle had cut the bonds of her slavery. She gave that not a single thought—was only full of horror and self-loathing, an awe that made her shun her fellows, and keep to the solitude of her room.

She did not appear on the morning of the funeral, but sat watching the procession, as it wound its slow length along, from the retirement of her own boudoir.

An immense string of carriages followed the open hearse, with its four white horses, and load of lovely white blossoms, that entirely concealed the handsome silver-mounted oak coffin.

In the first carriage rode the chief mourners, Copeland Vane, his three eldest sons, and Lord Mount Severn; in the next Bobbie, Mr. Wavenell, Mr. Bevoir and Paul Chisherley—the latter somewhat against his will, but he had been pressed to appear by Vane; and having been advised by Lady Dorothy, whom he consulted on the subject, to do so, he consented to swell the army of mourners. As her ladyship argued, very few knew he had been engaged to Opal, so his staying away would attract more attention than his attending. The rest of the carriages were filled with the neighbouring gentry, who had both liked and esteemed Washington C. Spragg, and some American friends, while the tenantry brought up the rear, marching four abreast.

Once in Dene churchyard the procession came to a standstill, not opposite the time-worn, weather-stained marble structure of the Chisherlys, but opposite a vault which

an eccentric Indian nabob purchased on settling at Dene, and then offered for a mere song when, finding the English climate did not agree with him, he wished to return to the East. It was a very magnificent affair, in grey granite, and Copeland Vane congratulated himself, as he looked at it, to think what a bargain he had made.

Opal might not have shared his feelings had she known, but she didn't know. In her distress she was glad that her father busied himself about all details, so saving her, though at the same time she wished all honour and respect to be paid to her husband's remains, and put no limit on the amount to be spent on the burial-place.

She knew he could not rest in the Chisherly's vault. Paul had not sold that when he sold Temple Dene. There was only room for two there, and he wished to lie there himself, and in the old days hoped another would lie by his side, close together in their last resting-place.

The solemn service was soon gone through, the coffin and its load of flowers lowered, and then they all drove back to hear the will read.

The library was full of people, as Mr. Wavenell, in clear distinct tones, read the document aloud. Opal, in widow's weeds, looking pale and sad, yet lovely, sat between her aunt and sister. Mr. Vane, lounged in an easy chair behind the lawyer, facing his wife and Paul, the latter of whom he watched as a cat would a mouse.

There was something working in his crafty brain that made him wondrous civil to, and watchful of, the young man. Next to Paul stood Blackie, leaning against the chimney-piece; then Bertie, Bob, and the Earl in a group; and further on Mr. Bevoir, two American gentlemen, the trustees, and others filling up the corners of the spacious room.

The four hundred was secured to Copeland Vane for his life, two hundred a year each to Blackie, Bert, and Bob, a gift of diamonds to Ruby, costing not less than five hundred pounds, a similar suite of jewels to Lady Dorothy, to "his dearly-loved wife, Opal Spragg," was bequeathed ten thousand a year, with Temple Dene and all in it, to make what use she pleased of, without let or hindrance.

As he had been generous in life, so was he generous in death. He did nothing but down to remain single—to be faithful to his memory; he left her free, to make use of a large income and a splendid house as she thought best. It was hardly expected by any of the listeners, and to one it came like a blow.

Paul's bronzed cheek grew deadly pale as he listened. There had been an unspoken hope in his heart—a hope which he vainly tried to crush down as unseemly so soon after Spragg's death—that Opal, if left penniless, might in time come to be his wife. A distant relative had recently left him a couple of hundred pounds a year, and with that in a new country, and Opal by his side, he would soon be able to make a comfortable competency. But his dream of a rancho in Texas, and a loving wife, faded away like a morning mist before the sunrays as he heard the words that made his love a wealthy woman, and threw up a barrier between them.

He hardly listened to the rest of the will, which disposed of the American's vast fortune to different hospitals and public institutions.

What did he care that this hospital got ten thousand, and that five, and a third only two? It was nothing to him; and he was so wretched and cast down that he did not hear the legacies of fifty and a hundred pounds left to Mrs. Marshall, Benson, and other of the old Chisherly retainers. He was dazed, numb, and made his adieu as speedily as possible, holding the widow's cold little hand for only a second's space, during which she kept her eyes fastened on the drapery of her gown, and failing to notice Vane's extreme urbanity of manner, and almost fawning politeness; and making his escape, hurried to the "Blue

Dragon," and flinging himself in a capacious old chair, lit his pipe, and tried to soothe his troubled feelings by a big smoke.

A few days after the funeral Mrs. Spragg left Temple Dene and went abroad with Lady Dorothy; but before she left she gave orders that the door of the turret-chamber was to be walled up, and also the secret slide that led from the principal bedchamber to it. There should be no more ghastly tragedies enacted there, she determined.

They wandered through the Riviera, and visited many sunny southern towns, settling at last for a long stay in Florence. There they were joined by the Earl and Countess of Mount Severn, who brought news that chased the returning look of peace and happiness from Opal's fair face, and steeped it once more in deepest melancholy. Max had been shot through the heart while fighting against the Boers at Majuba Hill, and the bullet pierced a little white kid glove—a woman's glove—that he carried in his breast.

"Belonged to some actress, I suppose," said Ruby, as she finished her story.

"Do you?" snapped her ladyship, looking daggers at the Countess.

"Yes, I do. Don't you, Opal?"

But Opal only shook her head, and said nothing. She knew the glove was one she dropped at Branksome Brac the night they first dined with the Duchess José. Her glove had mysteriously disappeared. She understood its disappearance now.

"Will you mind going back to England now?" queried Lady Dorothy a few days later.

"Not—not—if—I may go—to Westcourt—with you," faltered Mrs. Spragg.

"Of course you may, my dear!" returned the old lady, briskly. "But haven't you got over your horror of living at Temple Dene yet?"

"Hardly yet, aunt."

"And it is a year and a half since your poor husband was murdered."

"Yes. Still the horror would all come back if I lived there—alone."

"I see. You ought not to live there alone, though."

"I can't well help it."

"Have one of your brothers to stay with you."

"I can't do that. Blackie has just passed, and joins his regiment shortly. Bert is reading hard for the bar, and Bobbie must still remain at school."

"True. Well I won't suggest Cope and his wife."

"No. Besides, they would not come."

"Indeed! Why not?"

"The silver mine is beginning to turn out well Mrs. Vane wrote me yesterday, will yield at least a thousand a year, and they are going over to America, and intend to stay there for some time."

"I hope they will be happy," sneered her ladyship, spitefully.

"I hope so," echoed Opal, gently, showing she bore her father no grudge for the shabby way in which he had treated her.

"I can't say that I am sorry you will have no one to keep you company at Temple Dene?"

"Why?" in surprise.

"Because I shall have you all to myself at Westcourt."

"Ah! I see."

"And I mean to chase away all that melancholy, and make you gay and happier than you have ever been before."

"I hope you will succeed, dear aunt," she returned, affectionately. "And yet I fear the shadow of the past will ever darken my life."

"And I predict that some day you will be perfectly happy, and that the past will seem like nothing save an ugly dream that is not worth remembering."

"I trust so." And Opal bent her fair head over Ruby's son and heir that lay on her lap—an extremely ugly infant of eight months

old—who decidedly favoured his plain father, and not his handsome mother.

"Is Augustus going to stay here?"

"No. I should think Ruby means to return with us."

"And if she does, she will, no doubt of that. The grey mare's the best horse. Hal hal!" and she chuckled vigorously as she spoke.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

ONE of Lady Dorothy's first acts on returning to England was to put up a handsome monument in Denechurchyard to the memory of Max Lonsdale. It stood next Edith's, and was frequently visited by Opal, who kept the three monuments covered with fresh blooms.

It was a sad, sweet pleasure to the pale, stately woman, with her mournful face and wistful smile, to go to God's acre, and spend some hours almost daily with her dead. They seemed to be a tie that bound her to the old life—the old happy days. Would they ever come again? she wondered sometimes. It hardly seemed likely. Her life was peaceful at Westcourt, and that was all. It could not be termed happy.

She did her duty; went much amongst the poor and gave freely to all in need, and consulted her agent with regard to her property whenever it was necessary, and visited her house and her servants occasionally; and yet—and yet there was a void in her heart, a yearning she hardly knew for what, until one day the veil fell from her eyes, and she knew what would make her life perfect, drive the shadows away, and bring forth the sunshine.

She had been over to Temple Dene, and returning in the afternoon decided to walk, having Turk with her. She set off leisurely, not hurrying herself in the least, and when near Dene Wood was so absorbed with her thoughts that she did not at first notice the quick patter, patter of the rain. But as it soon fell fiercer and sharper she was roused from her reverie, and made for the wood to gain shelter.

Just as she arrived a vivid flash of lightning crimsoned the sky, followed by a terrific peal of thunder.

With a cry she shrank against the trunk of a great tree, covering her face with her trembling hands, and then recovering herself prepared to go out again into the open, and face the blinding storm of rain.

She hesitated an instant, when another flash, longer and more brilliant than the first, decided her, and she was stepping from under the sheltering tree when she saw a gentleman coming swiftly through the wood. She did not recognise him at first, till he stopped before her, exclaiming—

"Mrs. Spragg!"

"Pa—Mr. Chiehorly," she stammered, blushing divinely, as she met his glance.

"How is it you are here?" he demanded, tersely.

"I was walking from Temple Dene, when the rain commenced, and hurried here for shelter."

"It is not safe. We are going to have a terrible storm."

"What—what—shall—I—do?" she faltered, turning pale, for she had a horror of lightning.

"The Blue Dragon is the nearest place, let me take you there. Put this on," throwing his macintosh over her shoulders. "Now, if we hurry, you will not get much wet."

Silently she allowed him to wrap her up, and then, drawing her hand through his arm, to hurry her across the common to the inn. She was pretty dry when they arrived, save her hat. Paul and Turk were dripping.

"Lors, surr! how wet you be!" exclaimed Nancy Riveller, coming out to receive them, and beaming on them delightedly.

"Never mind me," said Paul, quickly, "I shall be all right in a trice. Take Mrs. Spragg to my parlour and bring a pair of dry shoes if you have them for her, and then some hot tea."

Mrs. Riveller obeyed his injunctions, and soon Opal was sitting in the quaint, old-world parlour, with its stiff chairs, faded tapestry, and antique prints, in a pair of Mrs. Riveller's shoes, which were about six sizes too large for her, with Turk, who had been duly rubbed and dried by Dick, at her side, and a queer, delft, tea-equipage before her.

Paul joined her in a few moments, and made some polite, but rather formal inquiries about her state of comfort.

"Only my feet were wet," she said blushing. "You wrapped me up so well."

"And your pretty hat," he rejoined, glancing at the dainty contrivance of feathers and satin that had decorated her head, and which was now reduced to a pulpy mass.

"That does not matter," she returned, indifferently.

"No, I don't suppose it does," he agreed, a little stiffly, remembering that the woman who sat opposite him in the great chippendale chair, with the soft, white gown and the big, coarse shoes, had ten thousand a year, and therefore could be nothing to him.

"I hope you won't suffer?" she said, with a gentle glance at the face which was so inexpressibly dear to her.

"Not at all. I am used to getting wet, out shooting, and had you not been here should have kept my damp things on."

"I am glad I am here, then," she said, quickly.

"So am I," he rejoined.

"Did you enjoy your stay abroad?" he queried next, breaking a rather awkward silence.

"Not very much," replied Mrs. Spragg, as she poured out the tea.

"You were away some time?"

"Yes a long while. And where have you been?" looking at him with a tender light in the sapphire eyes, that made him long to take her in his arms and kiss her.

"I have been here, at the Blue Dragon," he returned soberly, subduing the mad impulse.

"All the time?" eagerly.

"Yes. All the time."

"Ah!" was all she said, yet there was keen disappointment in that one little word. She had been at Westcourt six weeks, and yet this man whom she knew now was all the world to her, who could make her life one long pleasure, had never been to see her, had purposely avoided her.

"Will you ask Mrs. Riveller if my boots are dry?" she said, wearily, pushing away her cup and rising to look out of the window at the rain-drenched woods and fields.

"Yes—I will—ask her. But—you had better—not go—yet," he said hesitatingly, for he found it very pleasant to have her there opposite him, to be able to look at her beautiful face and hear her voice, notwithstanding that she was possessed of ten thousand a year.

"It has stopped raining," she announced, still gazing out of the window, thereby not seeing the yearning, wistful look in his blue eyes.

"Still it is very wet," he objected.

"That won't matter. I wish to get home," this last rather imperiously, for her heart was sore.

"Then I will call Nancy," and he did so, and the dainty boots were put on, and Mrs. Spragg prepared to leave.

"I shall see you over to Westcourt," he announced.

"Very well," she said, simply; and so these two, who had once been so much to each other, set off like a pair of strangers, and hardly said a word to each other during the walk, and yet both felt strangely happy—happier than they had since that day when they parted on the Dene Levels.

She knew what would content her—what was more to her than rank or wealth, or position; and he was inwardly railing at fate, that had thrown up the barrier of money between him and the woman he loved so well.

Lady Dorothy was delighted to see them together, and gave Paul a cordial, general invitation to Westcourt, which he accepted and didn't intend to make use of; only having seen Opal again he could not keep away from the house that sheltered her, and came again and again, yielding to the fascination he could not resist.

The old lady did all in her power to throw the lovers together. "They had suffered so much in the past, why should they not be happy in the present?" she reasoned, and so enticed Paul to dinners, and teas, and tennis parties, and even got him to stay in the house.

All things were going smoothly. Opal, in her new-found happiness forgot some of the sorrow that clouded her young life. There was a possibility of perfect joy and contentment in the future—in that reuniting of hearts—that nothing should part save death, and she dreamt of that and lost her wistful look, seeming to grow quite young and girlish and vivacious, and more lovely.

Lady Dorothy crowed and chuckled, and muttered with delight; but her delight turned to annoyance, when, one day, Sir Ivors Rowland presented himself at Westcourt. She knew what he came for, and could not refuse him.

He haunted Opal like a shadow, and at last, braving her cold disdain, offered his hand for the third time.

Firmly, yet gently, she declined it.

"There is no hope for me?" he asked, despondently.

"None," she returned with decision. "I married once without love, I would never do so again."

"And—you do not love me?"

"No; and even if I did so," she continued, calmly, "I would not now marry you."

"Why not?" he demanded, hastily.

"Because I consider that you belong to another woman—that it is your duty to marry another woman."

"What do you mean?"

"The Duchess de Pescara is now a widow," she answered, pointedly.

"And—and—you think—I ought to—marry her?"

"I think so."

"You wish this?"

"No, I do not wish it. Still if you make any one your wife I think that she should be the one."

"I see," he said, slowly. "Good-bye, and with one long glance at the fair face, with its sapphire eyes and frame of amber hair, he went out—went to marry the woman who had become a weariness and a misery to him, and thus expiate the sin of his youth."

Meanwhile Paul took alarm at the advent of the handsome highlander, and retired, like a sensitive snail, into his shell. Here was a fitting spouse for Mrs. Spragg—a man rich, good-looking, titled. What right had he, Paul, a man almost a pauper, to enter the lists against such swains? It was ridiculous. He hadn't the ghost of a chance. He would go away and bury himself and his sorrows in the backwoods of America, or the jungles of India, and never look on the face he loved again.

Having made up his mind to this he paid a formal visit to Westcourt, and found Ruby and Lady Dorothy sitting together in one of the arbours.

"Ah! glad to see you?" cried her ladyship.

"You've been quite a stranger lately?"

"Yes," he answered, gloomily.

"What have you been doing?" asked the Countess.

"Preparing to go away," he announced.

"Where?" almost screeched Lady Dorothy, in her dismay.

"To India or America."

"What are you going there for?"

"Because I am not wanted here," he returned, grimly.

"What nonsense! We all want you."

"Not Sir Ivors Rowland."

"Pooh! What has he got to do with it?"

"A great deal, it seems to me. Op—Mrs. Spragg—of course, means to marry him."

"Mrs. Spragg means to do nothing of the kind."

"No, Paul," said Ruby, gently, "you need not fear. Opal will never marry again unless you ask her. She will never wed for money or position. She has more than enough of that, and her past life has been so sad, as the life of any woman who sells herself for worldly gain must be. Who would do it if they knew what they had to go through?" she cried, excitedly. "There is no happiness for a woman who barter herself for diamonds or position. Money may buy comforts, luxuries, ease, but it never can purchase the bliss that those two young noodles are enjoying now," and she waved her hand towards Blackie, who, with his arm round Maud Rainham's waist, was sauntering up and down the walk at the further end of the garden, and whispering all sorts of nonsense into her ear.

"Perhaps you are right; still I think your sister likes the highlander."

"I don't think she cares for him."

"And I am sure she does not," declared Lady Dorothy, triumphantly.

"Why?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Because she refused him three days ago for the third time."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as though a weight were lifted off his mind.

"She is in the drawing-room alone," continued his hostess, significantly, "and I have no doubt she will be pleased to see you."

"Thanks," he answered, simply, getting up, and going off in the direction of the drawing-room.

Opal sat in a low lounging chair, Turk as usual stretched at her feet. She looked a little pale and sad, but infinitely lovely, and the colour leapt quickly to her soft cheek as Paul entered the room.

"How do you do?" she said, striving to appear calm. "It is some time since we have seen you."

"Yes. I have purposely kept away."

"Paul!"

"Yes, and I came to-day to tell you that I had determined to go away, and never see you again."

"Paul, can you leave me?" she wailed, rising and stretching out her hands imploringly.

"No," he said fondly, drawing her to his breast, "I have misjudged you. Forgive me dearest, my love for you made me unjust."

"There is nothing to forgive," she answered, softly, looking at him with radiant eyes.

"And yet—I might have left you."

"Cruel Paul!" smothering his wavy hair with one hand. "Think what I should have suffered."

"Would you have cared much?" he questioned with passionate eagerness, yet letting her go from his embrace.

"So much," she answered, "that life would have been worthless to me. Do you remember what you said to me once? 'With your love I should be happy—a beggar, and rich; without it miserable—a sultan, and poor.' So it is with me now. Of what avail is all my wealth if I cannot make you happy? Cannot give you back what you have lost? For the sake of the little child that lies yonder under the churchyard sod I was false to your memory. Let me now make up to you if I can for the pain you suffered then, when you found me untrue, if you have not changed towards me."

"Changed!" he cried, "to you? I could not change even in death. I should but love you better after!"

As the passion-fraught words left his lips, with a glad cry she sprang back into his outstretched arms, and nestled her bright head on his bosom, while he poured out a long pent-up store of kisses on her sweet face and quivering mouth.

Two years later, a group of happy-looking people sat out on the lawn at Temple Dene,

under the shade of a widespreading oak. They were Lady Dorothy, Paul Chiocherly and Opal, who held a bundle of lace and cambric in her arms, while Turk lay a little way off, his great tawny head on one side, as he watched them.

"And you are perfectly happy?" said her ladyship, gleefully.

"Perfectly," returned Opal. "I could not be otherwise, for Paul is a husband-lover."

"And you a sweetheart-wife," he smiled, stooping to kiss her, and throwing an arm round mother and child.

"Lucky mortals! to have found perfect happiness," murmured Lady Dorothy, regarding her great grand-niece and her parents with approving eyes.

"There's a bliss beyond all the minstrel has told, When two that are link'd in one heavenly tie, With heart never changing and brow never cold,

Love on thro' all ills, and love on till they die. One hour of a passion so sacred is worth Whole ages of heartless and wandering bliss;

And oh! if there be an Elysium on earth, It is this—it is this."

[THE END.]

BEAUTIFUL GRASSES.

THE Japanese eulalia and its varieties form, when taken together, one of the prettiest and most distinct groups of ornamental grasses that we have in cultivation at the present time, and all of them should be grown by all who possess the necessary facilities for their successful cultivation. They are natives of Japan, whence they were introduced some fifteen years ago, and are hardy, perennial plants, of reed-like habit, growing from five to seven feet in height, having long, narrow, graceful leaves, either green or variegated, according to the variety, and which retain their colour perfectly until destroyed by severe frosts.

The flowers are produced about the middle of September, the flower panicles being produced from the summit of the stalks. At first they are brownish and not at all showy, but, as the flowers open, the branches of the panicles curl over gracefully in a one-sided manner, thus presenting the appearance of ostrich plumes, or what is known as the Prince of Wales feather.

Each of the individual flowers, which are very numerous upon each branch of the cluster, has at its base a tuft of long, silky hairs, and these contribute to the feathery lightness of the whole, so that if these flowers are dried in any dry, airy situation they will be found to be very desirable for decorative purposes during the winter season, while cut sprays of the foliage are extensively used with good effect during summer season for filling vases and other cut flower work.

The eulalias are plants easily cultivated, doing best when given a very deep, well enriched soil, a good bunching of coarse, littersy manure, and copious waterings during seasons of drought; and as they do best when well established it is well to avoid disturbing them by frequent removals.

Every autumn they should be given a dressing of well-decayed stable manure, and this should be dug in early in the spring. Propagation is effected by dividing the plants, and this should be done as early in the spring as possible.

THERE are no times in life when opportunity, the chance to be and do, gathers so richly about the soul as when it has to suffer. Then everything depends on whether the man turns to the lower of the higher helps. If he resorts to mere expedients and tricks the opportunity is lost. He comes out no richer nor greater: nay, he comes out harder, poorer, smaller for his pain. But, if he turns to God, the hour of suffering is the turning hour of his life.

THE SAILOR-WIFE'S PRAYER.

—o—

Oh! love, thou restless wanderer,
In this and other lands,
None fairer wilt thou find than she
Who walks to-night the sands,

And listens to the moonlit waves
That break along the bar,
And sighs: "Ah, me! no tidings ye
Bring from my love afar!

"Oh! heaving sea, I cry to thee!
Love's voice is ever heard;
Thy winds and caves and swelling waves
Should with the cry be stirred!

"Wild are thy billows, broad thy waste,
And stout the bark that bears
My sailor bold and all I hold
Dear in this world of cares!

"Smooth down his path, oh! mighty sea;
Ye winds be fair and strong;
Ye tempests ride not through the night
To hide the starry throng!

"My heart, oh! see—my heart's with thee;
My love's borne on thy breast;
Speed, speed, and bring him back to me—
To these fond arms and rest!"

Oh! wind and wave, and star and sky,
And Heaven, that guardeth all,
Have in your care the poor wife's prayer,
Lest ill her love befall!

W. B. D.

IVA'S QUEST.

—o—

CHAPTER XIII.

GERDA'S visit passed swiftly—all too swiftly for her and Iva. Mr. Duciel lingered at Pierrepont Hall until the day before his cousin returned to the Chase; no one knew of his presence.

Lady Pierrepont's cold continued, and confined her to her own apartment and the drawing-room.

Timothy, who had always performed the duties of valet and confidential servant to Sir James, had the sole care of the library; none of the other servants guessed that the stately room concealed a guest, and that the small slip opening from it, which in olden days had been used as a bedroom when any unwonted festivity filled the Hall to overflowing, was once more tenanted, and this time by a visitor to whom Sir James would have been proud to pay honour.

But Iva dreaded nothing so much as Lord Ducie discovering his presence in the neighbourhood, and so he even deprived himself of the last few hours of Gerda's stay by leaving the Hall on Friday evening, walking five miles in the darkness of the winter's night, and so catching the last train from Netherton to London.

Sir James looked at his favourite a little wistfully when they were left alone.

"In tears, Gerda? Child, I hope in my eagerness to help you I have not wronged you?"

She turned to him with an April face.

"You have made me happy," she whispered. "I always loved you, Sir James, but I shall never forget what you have done for us now. You seem to stand in my father's place!"

"I think he has behaved abominably!" said the Baronet, who was given to express his feelings freely. "A man has no right to sacrifice his child to such a prejudice."

Gerda looked at her kind old friend wistfully.

"I don't think it is papa's fault!"

"My dear child, I never doubted your stepmother would try and set him against it, but

the absurd objection he raises can't be her doing."

"I think it is."

"But, child, if Lady Ducie had never come to Netherton you and Iva would still be cousins!"

"I don't think that is the true reason."

"Gerda!"

"Papa thinks it is, but it is she who suggested the idea—I feel certain of it!"

"But why?"

"I cannot think. She does not like Iva, and she hates me! Sir James, there is a mystery about it all I can't fathom, only I wish—"

"You wish what, child?"

"That I could stay with you. Sir James, I dread going home! I think if Lady Ducie were to find out what has happened she would kill me!"

"My dear child, I would keep you gladly, but my wife is so intimate with Lady Ducie it would never answer. When she is about again you would be as narrowly watched here as at the Chase!"

"I think Lady Pierrepont suspects something—she looks at me so curiously."

"She suspects nothing, dear; she is a bit bothered between the old love and the new! You see she has been fond of you all her life, and she doesn't find it easy to turn round and dislike you to please your stepmother!"

He was quite right. All the old tenderness of Lady Pierrepont's manner returned on that last day, and when she bade Gerda goodbye she said, gently,—

"I may have seemed unkind to you, child, but you will forgive a fidgety old woman? Remember, dear, I shall always love you. You must look upon Pierrepont Hall as a second home."

"Indeed I do!"

And just then it seemed more homelike than the Chase, for a very cold welcome greeted Gerda on her return. She could not help seeing she was regarded as a kind of culprit—a species of state prisoner.

She was never forbidden, in so many words, to leave the house alone, but Lady Ducie contrived deftly that some companionship should always await her when she was going out. Gerda had been used to perfect liberty, and this surveillance tortured her.

"I feel like a prisoner!" she said to her father once, when Christmas was drawing near, and they two chanced to be alone. "Papa, why am I watched and spied on at every turn?"

Lord Ducie was changed from the idolising parent of other days—changed in himself too.

He never complained of any pain, but he suffered from almost perpetual drowsiness. He would sleep sometimes for hours in his chair.

His interest in what went on was growing languid. He never seemed really alert and able to take part in the daily incidents of life. It had struck Gerda before, but never so forcibly as now.

He looked at her with a bewildered, almost frightened air, cast his eyes timidly round the room before he answered,—

"You should not give cause for it."

"I don't, papa."

"You used to be a good girl. We were very happy together in the old times, Gerda."

"Very?"

"But it is better now. Your stepmother is a good manager, and takes all the trouble off my hands. She is a good woman, Gerda! Be dutiful to her, and all will be right!"

"Papa, are you well?"

"Perfectly, child."

"You don't seem so."

"I am not so young as I was, and I am very tired—so much seems to have happened lately."

And then he sat down in his old favourite chair, and before Gerda had realised it was placidly asleep.

She grew anxious as time wore on. Lady

Ducie was emphatically the head of the establishment; gradually the husband had become little more than a cypher in his own house.

My lady was uniformly kind and affable to Gerda, only she never suffered her to leave the house alone; for the rest, a few intimate visitors came as usual. There were no strangers invited, no parties given, but this was not at all surprising; the state of Lady Ducie's health required quiet and attention, for it was now publicly announced that an heir to Netherton might be expected in the spring.

Gerda heard the news without one pang of jealousy. Secure in Iva's love she recked little that the estate she had regarded as her heritage—the title she had thought would be her lover's—might be lost to them both; she had perfect trust in her lover. While he remained constant to her she cared little for any loss of worldly honours. All that Gerda prized was Iva's love; while that was hers she wanted naught besides.

Only when the new year came, and she could not blind herself to the strange change in her father's state, she resolved to make an effort to force him to have medical advice. He himself pooh-poohed the idea. My lady lifted her eyebrows and declared her husband to be in perfect health, but Gerda was not to be foiled.

One day when Dr. Sturgis had been paying a brief medical visit to Lady Ducie, old Nurse Brown met him in the hall.

He had attended at the Chase for thirty years, so he and Goody were old friends. She began without the slightest attempt at ceremony.

"My toothache's [mortal] bad, doctor. I thought maybe you'd give me something to ease the pain."

Dr. Sturgis had fancied the old woman's teeth had all forsaken her, but he was a kindly man, and loved gossip as much as any old woman.

"Come upstairs, nurse," he said, pleasantly. "The draught here can't do your aches and pains any good."

This was just what she wanted. She took him up in triumph to her own quarters where, not seven months before, Lord Ducie had led him to look at an old family picture.

"Now, nurse, what's the matter?"

"Nothing with me, doctor," said the old woman, with a twinkle in her eyes, "but my young lady wanted a word with you, and seeing she'd no chance of one unless I got it for her, I thought a fib could be forgiven me. Sir, there's something going on here I can't fairly make out; only you must be kind to my pretty child, for there's just a sea of troubles surging round her head!"

"Where is she?"

No need to ask; at that moment the door opened, and Gerda entered. Dr. Sturgis was astounded. He had seen her last the evening before Iva left the Chase at the dinner-party given the very night of her unknown engagement. Then she was in the zenith of her beauty—a brilliant vision, with no shadow of care clouding her star-like eyes. Now all was changed.

Gerda looked older than her years; she was terribly thin, and her face had that pinched, drawn look often the forerunner of severe illness. She was dressed in black, faultlessly neat, but very trying to her pale face. The doctor's first idea was that the fair young daughter of the Chase was fading away.

"Gerda!" in his surprise calling her by the name he had used when she was a little child, then remembering himself, "Miss Ducie, what is the matter? How can I help you?"

"Call me Gerda," said the girl, with her old sweet smile, which for a moment lit up her poor tired face with all its former beauty "call me Gerda, Dr. Sturgis, and then I shall know you mean to be kind to me."

"My poor child," and he held the feverish hand in his with fatherly compassion, "tell me what I can do for you?"

"It is not for myself. I want you to see papa."

"Lord Ducie? I did see him not five minutes ago. He passed through his wife's boudoir while I was there."

"What did you think of him?"

"I did not think about him. He just nodded to me and passed on."

"Dr. Sturgis, he is very ill."

"I hope you are mistaken, Miss Gerda. Surely his wife would have noticed it?"

"She won't see it. I have spoken to her again and again, but she only laughs at me."

"What is it you fancy?"

"I think his brain is failing."

"Gerda!"

"Listen, he goes to bed at ten invariably; he is never down before nine."

"Some people require more sleep than others."

"You don't understand. Of the thirteen hours he is downstairs I suppose he spends more than half in sleep."

"The Doctor started."

"Impossible!"

"Gerda went on—"

"He cannot fix his attention long on anything. I do not mean his mind wanders; on the contrary, he is quite himself when awake, but, Dr. Sturgis, he never is awake for more than a very little while at a time."

"Do you mean he goes to sleep?"

"A drowsiness comes over him. He sits down, and in five minutes he is asleep, calm, peaceful slumber as far as I can judge. If you wake him he is himself for a minute or two, then drowsiness returns. Don't misunderstand me, Dr. Sturgis. When he is himself his intellect is as clear as ever, but this drowsiness gains on him. I do believe now he could not sit out a regular dinner such as one has with guests."

"Dr. Sturgis looked bewildered."

"Is he feverish or excited?"

"Not in the least. He is more like a person who has put away all care. He seems to live only in the present. His state resembles what I have read of the condition of people so very old that they may be said to slumber through the time while they are waiting for death."

"This is horrible!"

"I wish I had spoken to you before, but I had no opportunity."

"You might have called on me."

"I am never allowed to go out alone."

"Why not?"

"It is Lady Ducie's pleasure."

"He shrugged his shoulders."

"Does your father go out at all?"

"He drives with his wife every day when it is fine, but," she lowered her voice, "he is always fast asleep when he comes home."

"Does he read at all?"

"He never opens a book. Even the *Saturday Review* and *Graphic*, which he used to be fond of, are never read."

"Does he write letters?"

"Lady Ducie made herself his private secretary soon after they were married. He may sign his name sometimes; he does no more."

"How does he pass his days?"

"The fact is these attacks of drowsiness are so frequent, and last so long, I doubt if he ever has an hour entirely free from them."

"Don't the servants suspect his illness?"

"No, he is usually himself at meal times, and excepting then they see very little of him."

"His wife must be aware of his state."

Gerda looked at the doctor; their eyes met. He took her hand as tenderly as if she had been a child of his own.

"My dear, tell me all that is in your mind? You can trust me fully."

"But you are Lady Ducie's doctor."

"Gerda, I cannot refuse my skill to anyone who desires my aid. I am bound to do my utmost for Lady Ducie's bodily health, but there our connection ends. I do not like her; there is no friendship between us. I have

known your father since we were boys; I have watched you grow up. Once more, believe me if there was an open rupture between you and Lady Ducie I should openly espouse your cause. I am only a country doctor, Gerda, but I am some judge of human nature, and I tell you plainly I don't like your stepmother."

"I have thought," began Gerda, with trembling lips, "she encouraged the drowsiness."

"How?"

"She will never hear of papa going out without her. She is always driven very slowly in a close brougham when I go with her; the heat makes me almost faint. Then she never likes him to go to any old friends, and since the Pierreponts went away a fortnight ago no one has been admitted except you. She won't even let papa go to church; she says the service would be too much for her, and she does not like to stay at home alone."

"All this is no proof, Gerda?"

"It is all I can tell you. She likes to get papa in her rooms—she keeps them very hot. Sometimes she makes him stay there shut up with her for hours."

"I don't like it," said Dr. Sturgis, reflectively. "All you tell me makes me feel uneasy, and yet there is nothing definite in it. Lady Ducie might resort that being in a delicate state of health, having no relations or old friends in the place, it was natural she should want a great deal of her husband's society."

"I have not told you the worst."

"What is it?"

"It is so awful."

"My dear, you must be frank with me. For your father's sake tell me all you can?"

"I think she gives him—things."

"Things?"

"I am not sure what. Papa is always thirsty, and I have seen him drinking in her boudoir."

"He might be drinking water."

"No; there was a strange smell to it. I have seen bottles of brandy go into the room. I don't know what to think, only I am frightened."

"Lord Ducie was always a most abstemious man; I have noticed it repeatedly."

"He is still. He rarely takes more than a glass of claret at dinner, but his appetite is quite gone. He sends away his plate almost untouched."

"I must go and have a talk with him."

"You won't betray me?"

"I never betrayed anyone in my life."

"Because I think Lady Ducie would almost kill me if she knew what I have told you."

"She will never know from me. Gerda, how I wish I could help you. What a pity the Pierreponts are from home!"

"Yes," she said, with a sigh, "and they will not be back till the spring. They went on to Devonshire from London without returning to the Hall."

"Do you know, I think it would be a good thing to write to your cousin."

"Iva?"

"Yes, the young man we met here in the autumn. He seemed a fine young fellow; and, Gerda, if there is anything wrong going on, you ought to have a friend at hand, and who so suitable as your kinsman?"

"It would never do."

"He might come down unexpectedly, and never betray that I had dropped him a line of warning. Lord Ducie wouldn't be so inhospitable as not to beg him to stay a few days."

"He would."

"But he seemed to like him so much."

"If Iva came to the Chase its doors would be closed against him."

"But why?"

"She blushed furiously."

"Is that it, Gerda? Is Mr. Ducie out of favour because he wanted to be my lord's son-in-law? Why, I should have thought him a most desirable husband for any girl."

"It is so hard!" said Gerda. "We loved each other, and we had to part!"

"You mean Lord Ducie refused his consent. On what grounds?"

"He said cousinship. We always thought Lady Ducie made him object."

"Hem! And so Netherston Chase is closed against him. Is it mourning over this that has given you such pale cheeks, Gerda?"

She passed over the question.

"You see he cannot come. There is no one I could send for. You are my only hope, Dr. Sturgis."

"Well, we'll see. I have to see her ladyship to-morrow, and afterwards I shall come and look after Nurse Brown's toothache. Now, can you give me any idea where I shall find your father?"

"He will be coming down to lunch."

"Bravo! My lady lunches upstairs; I will invite myself. Miss Gerda, it would be better for our conspiracy if you did not appear in the dining-room. Keep up your courage, child."

"And you will tell me just what you think?"

"I promise you."

Fortune favoured him; he met Lord Ducie in the hall.

"I have stayed gossiping with old nurse over her ailments till I shall miss my dinner. Do you feel hospitable enough to give me a crust of bread-and-cheese, Lord Ducie?"

"We can do better for you than that. Come along; it will be quite a treat to have a visitor once more."

The repast was daintily served and the viands of the choicest, but Lord Ducie barely touched anything. A glass of claret and a biscuit constituted the chief of his repast, and Dr. Sturgis noticed that his hand shook like an aspen leaf as he took hold of the silver claret-jug.

"You don't seem to have much appetite, Lord Ducie? Now, this hard frost makes me hungry."

"I never want much to eat," returned the peer. "I had something to say to you, Sturgis, only I can't remember what it was."

"Let us take a stroll on the terrace," said the crafty doctor; "you may recall it."

He had seen Lord Ducie was almost asleep, and thought the fresh, cold January air might revive him.

He led his host out on the terrace, first desiring the butler to bring two cups of rather strong coffee to them in a quarter-of-an-hour.

They had not taken half-a-dozen turns when the dazed, bewildered look left Lord Ducie's face.

"That was a famous prescription of yours, doctor. I feel another man."

"Finish the cure by drinking a cup of coffee; then I will come with you into your den, and I daresay you will recollect just what you wanted to tell me."

The man of physic took care to throw both the windows of the "den" open, for the fire was so large as to make the heat unbearable.

He placed his friend where the fresh air blew freely on his temples, saw the coffee drunk, and then came to the conclusion that Gerda was right.

Some evil influence was certainly at work. It had not gone very far at present—that is, not too far for cure.

Already Lord Ducie had brightened up into something of his old self. He put one hand to his forehead, seemed trying to recollect, and at last said, cheerfully,—

"I have it, doctor! I wanted to talk to you about my will. It's been in my mind for weeks, but it always seemed to escape me when I saw you."

"Your will!" exclaimed Dr. Sturgis; "that ought to have been thought of long ago."

"Why? I am not an old man, and I have no positive disease."

"But when a man has a wife and child it's a positive duty to provide for them."

Lord Ducie was searching among some papers. At last he found a half sheet of

foolscap partly covered with his small, clerkly writing.

"I do not want anyone to know about it," he said, awkwardly. "When a man has married more than once, you see, there are conflicting claims. I have thought over it a great deal, and I think it is a just will."

"You have remembered that before long Gerda will not be your only child?"

"I have remembered that; I have left Sir James Pierrepont executor conjointly with Mr. Green. They are both good men and true friends."

"And how am I help you?"

"It is not signed. I always shrink from the idea, but something tells me it would be better to have done with it. I want you to be a witness."

"Certainly; but you require two witnesses."

"Nurse Brown will be the other. My father provided for her so amply she requires nothing from me. Had she a legacy she would not be qualified for a witness."

Dr. Sturgis decided whatever attacks of somnia might affect Lord Dacie between them he was quite himself clear of intellect, quick of judgment.

"I cannot tell you its contents," said the nobleman, gravely. "When my second child is born I may revoke this will or make another. It is simply a temporary arrangement. I wish no one to know its provisions, only I have seen too much misery come from a man's neglecting to make a will I wished to be on the safe side."

Nurse Brown was called. Her master wrote his—Bertram Dacie. She affixed her laboured signature; the doctor did the same; then, when the old woman had departed, Lord Dacie folded the paper, and placed it in an envelope.

"You will not forget?" as he put it in the lowest drawer of his pedestal writing-table, and turned the key. "If anything happens you will know where to find this document."

"I shall not forget; and now, as an old friend, do let me advise you to take more exercise. You ought to have plenty of fresh air. It is almost suicide to shut yourself up indoors, as you have been doing lately; besides, you keep your rooms at far too high a temperature."

"My wife is a chilly subject."

"Then let her keep herself like a hot-house plant if she wishes it, only don't you follow the same regime. I know the Dacie constitution well enough to be sure that won't suit it."

He left his friend more puzzled than he would have owned. He was quite sure something was amiss, and seriously so, only he dared not confess that, if foul play there was, it was on the part of Lady Dacie.

Here was a woman owing everything to her husband—a woman who, as his death (unless she bore him a son), would be a mere nobody. She had, you will say, everything to gain by keeping her husband alive; as there was no settlement on her.

She seemed fondly attached to him and he to her, and yet when warned of a change in his health she scoffed at the idea of advice, and seemed to take a delight in inducing him to do the very things most likely to weaken him.

"I don't like it," muttered the Doctor, as he rode home. "The more I think of it the surer I am there is false play somewhere, and I doubt if somewhere does not mean my lady. She has quarrelled with his kinsman, isolated him from his old friends. Taken altogether, it looks bad."

He saw Gerda the next day, but could give her very little comfort.

"All I can advise you is to be as much with your father as possible. Contrive to get him into the open air, and whenever he is sitting with you open the windows. Try to get him to drink strong coffee, and interest him in things outside himself. I fear it is not much comfort for you, but remember I am watching

carefully. You have opened my eyes to the danger, and now I am on the alert."

Alas! the first effect of his advice to Gerda was very terrible.

Bent on obeying him to the letter the girl took almost to haunt her father's footsteps. Wherever he appeared she was sure to follow. She made so many visits to the boudoir in his company that my lady's suspicions were aroused, and she determined on forming some plan for the banishment of her hated step-daughter.

"Gerda," she said one morning, in the silken tone the girl always distrusted, "will you spend an hour with me in my boudoir this evening? Come up as soon as you and your father have finished dinner."

For my lady had ceased to take her repasts with the family, and had dainty little meals carried to her in her own apartment. She took little heed to Gerda's answer—she knew the girl dared not refuse.

"And as it is so fine this afternoon I should like you to drive to Notherton and see if those books I ordered have arrived. I will tell the servants the brougham is to be round at four."

Gerda marvelled.

Her father accompanied her, but his state was more pitiful than usual. That afternoon he began to dome almost before they passed through the lodge gates. Save for his bodily presence he was not with his child.

One half-hour after the brougham started a young man walked up to the grand entrance of the Chase, and asked for Lady Dacie.

Merrable, my lady's own maid, was waiting to receive him, and ushered him up to the boudoir.

Half covered with shawls, as she lay upon a downy sofa my lady made a very pretty picture in the firelight. A smile crossed her features as she recognised her visitor.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Ward."

"And I you. It is almost three months, Lady Dacie, since you heard of my wishes and promised me your help. I had almost begun to think you had forgotten alike my wishes and your own promise."

"I had not forgotten."

"Then—"

"There was much to think of and arrange. I repeat the promise I made you last October. If her father's influence and mine can influence her Gerda shall be your wife."

"She does not love me," said the young man, bitterly. "You need not tell me that."

"You knew that before, and yet you seemed perfectly willing."

"I am willing, and more than willing, to marry her. I am not a man of many affections, Lady Dacie. I have loved Gerda always. She has treated me with cruel scorn, she has heaped insults upon me, but I have never faltered in my wishes, never swerved in my design that she should be my wife."

"Willing or unwilling?"

"Aye, if I could win her love, if I could teach her to care for me, my life would be crowned with bliss."

"And if not?"

A look not good to see crossed his face.

"At least she would be mine—mine! No power of earth or Heaven could alter that? Gerda is proud. She might hate me, but once my wife she could bring no dishonour on my name. I should know that even if she did not love me I was nearer to her than anything else. I would teach her I was her master, and she belonged to me. If she suffered if I would be her loving slave, her humble worshipper. If she refused my homage I would teach her I would be conqueror. I would trample on her pride and break her spirit till, if she could not love me, I had taught her at least to fear."

My lady's eyes sparkled—she preferred the last alternative. There was something so fiendlike in this woman's nature that she absolutely rejoiced at the thought of her pure, innocent step-daughter delivered over to this

man's mercy, forced to suffer his hated carresses whether she would or not, forced to submit herself to him—body and soul.

"You know the reason which alone makes Lord Dacie consent to the match?"

"I know," he said, bitterly, "I never thought to be glad to win a nameless wife, but, yet, for her sake, I can bear even that!"

"The secret would be kept faithfully; only two people know it, my husband and myself."

"And Gerda."

"No, it has been kept from her; you are welcome to enlighten her if you please."

"It might tell her that I am willing to take her even so."

"It might."

"And you will let me see her?"

"Certainly."

"I may plead my own cause?"

"Here in this very room. I have told Gerda to come to me directly after dinner."

"I think I shall win," said Laurence, shrewdly; "a name, a home, a dower of fifty thousand pounds, those are inducements to make Gerda consent."

"Tell her frankly we cast her off if she refuses. For the sake of the family honour this roof must shelter her, but she will have no amusements, no relaxations; we shall mark in every way our sense of her shameful conduct; her life will not have much to brighten it if she is fool enough to refuse to share your home."

Dinner was served for two in the little salon that opened from the boudoir. When it was over my lady motioned him back.

"She will be there in a very few minutes' time."

"And you?"

"I am going to my own room."

The soft rays of the moderator lamp lit up the boudoir; Laurence Ward placed himself so as not to be seen until Gerda reached the middle of the room.

He had not long to wait; the handle turned, someone came softly in. He could hear the door closed on the other side, and a bolt shot. Doubtless he owed this service to my lady, who has resolved he should at least have a fair hearing if nothing else.

"Gerda!"

They stood face to face—the man, who worshipped with the mad passion which in some low, sensual natures takes the place of love; the girl, who hated with that innate distaste a pure-minded creature has by instinct for evil things.

Together, face to face, and alone.

The boudoir and my lady's other rooms were quite distinct from the rest of the house.

Says her stepmother (who had betrayed her into the snare, and certainly would not come to her rescue,) there was probably no human creature in that wing of the Chase save Gerda and her detested suitor.

"What does this mean?"

"Sit down, and I will tell you."

"I do not want to hear."

She had turned towards the door. Alas! in vain she tried the handle, it resisted her efforts; she understood then she was in this man's power. She had been betrayed into his hands; she had no alternative but to listen to whatever he had to say.

She would have preferred to stand, but the trembling of her limbs forced her to sit down. Warned that her strength was failing she sank upon a velvet chair, resolved to do all that in her lay to keep up her forces. She dared not think of fainting with no one at hand but the man she hated.

She was not strong; the last few weeks had tried her fearfully, and two or three times she had swooned without any apparent cause; so now she sat down, her hands clinging to the arm of the chair as though for support. She took no more notice of Laurence Ward than if he had not been there.

"It has come at last—the moment I have longed for. At last you are in my power, and you must, at least, listen to me."



[GERDA DOES NOT LOVE ME, ' SAID THE YOUNG MAN, BITTERLY; " YOU NEED NOT TELL ME THAT."]

She cast her eyes wildly round the room; but she did not utter a single word.

"It is no use," he said, brutally. "You are caged now securely enough, my little wild bird; it's no use fluttering your wings. You had better listen to me."

"What have you to say?"

"What you must long have guessed, that love you better than the whole world, and I want you for my own."

She shivered as one struck with a mortal chill. Where was Iva? Where was her kind old friend, Sir James, or even Dr. Sturgis? These three men were true to her. Any one of them could have rescued her from this hated lawyer. Oh! why were they all far away?

"You must know my answer," she said, coldly. "Ever since I suspected your desires I have been telling you as plainly as though I had spoken that they were in vain."

"And you refuse me?"

"I do, unhesitatingly."

"And if I refuse to take your answer."

"You must take it."

"What are your reasons?"

"I am not bound to tell them."

"Pardon me!"

"Well, I would have spared you them if I could—they are not flattering. I loathe you. If you enter a room where I am I feel it polluted by your bare presence. I think this is conclusive."

"It is not. I know perfectly you don't like me, and I am willing to look over it. Heaps of marriages begin with a little aversion."

"Will you understand me? It is not a little aversion, it is nearer hatred."

"All right."

"You seem to think I am telling you this that you may decide whether it changes your wishes. I am not thinking of your decision, but my own. Nothing in the world will induce me to marry you."

"Softly; wait a little," for she had gone to

the door, and again essayed to open it. "I think I can change your mind."

"You cannot."

"Listen," and for once the genuineness of the man's passion showed in his voice. "I know quite well I am not the sort of man you would have chosen; but I have made up my mind to own you. I never yet failed in ought I undertook. I have sworn I will marry you, and I shall keep my oath."

"Without my consent?"

"I shall get that."

"You mean I have no voice in the matter?"

"Yes," and the look in his eyes daunted her. "You have a voice. My wife you must be, shall be; but you have to decide whether I am your adoring lover or a husband who will teach you he is your master."

Gerda felt terrified.

"I think you must be mad."

"I am perfectly sane. I have Lord Ducie's consent to an early marriage, his best wishes for my success."

"My father knows I shall never marry you."

Laurence understood.

"You fly at higher aims. I have heard of your foolish fancy for that young Ducie."

"I love Iva Ducie with my whole heart."

"More shame for you."

"A woman has the right to love the man to whom her troth is plighted."

"You know perfectly well Mr. Ducie will never marry you."

"I know nothing of the sort."

"Did you never suspect the flimsy excuse given as your father's objection to the match was false, a plea just got up on the spur of the moment to hide the truth?"

Two red spots burnt in Gerda's cheeks.

"You speak as if you knew the real reason of my father's refusal to sanction my engagement."

"I do know it."

"What was it?"

"It will not be pleasant hearing."

"I would rather hear."

"Lord Ducie knew his kinsman inherited his own pride of rank, and that he would shrink from you in loathing if he knew your true history."

Faint and heart-sick was the girl. There was a reason. No one but herself guessed why these words filled her with terror, and yet she only said,—

"Explain yourself."

"No man would marry you unless willing to suffer shame for your sake. I am a self-made man, Gerda; I could bear anything for you. Your cousin is a Ducie of Netherton, and must remember his long descent."

"Speak!" she pleaded. "Only speak!"

"You are not a Ducie—you never were. The name your husband gives you will be the only one you have ever had a right to bear."

An indignant denial broke from Gerda's lips, then a bitter consciousness came to her that he would not have dared to make such a statement unless it was true.

"What have I done?" she cried, in her agony. "Oh! Iva, have I wrecked your life?" and before Laurence Ward could ask her meaning she sank to the ground at his feet, unconscious for the time of her misery.

(To be continued.)

In its refinements, its elegancies, its graces and adornments are seen the glory and perfection of life. It is the highest honour to be equal to them and capable of sustaining them, and the greatest happiness to appreciate them properly and enjoy them rationally.

To be a gentleman does not depend upon the tailor or the toilet; good clothes are not good habits. A gentleman is gentle, is modest, is courteous, is generous, is slow to take offence, and equally slow to offend.



["HETTY, IS IT A DREAM?" HARRY CRIED. "WAS IT YOU WHOSE BODY I RECOGNISED AND HAD BURIED?"]

NOVELETTE.]

HARRY'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

HARRY'S CHAMBERS.

It was twelve o'clock by the gilt timepiece, which complacently ticked away the hours—twelve o'clock in the morning—and the bright rays of an August sun shone on the silver teapot, which still remained on the breakfast-table of Harry Wingrove in his chambers at Inn.

"Your breakfast will be stone-cold, sir," said the laundress, knocking at the bedroom-door of the latter, after having cast an impatient glance at the time.

"All right, Mrs. Bouncer; I'll be out in a minute," a muffled voice replied from within, the sound of which did not heighten Mrs. Bouncer's hopes respecting the hour her duties would be completed; but after half-an-hour's interval, during which the delicacy prepared for her master's morning meal had been carried to the kitchen to be kept hot, Harry himself made his appearance.

"By Jove! Mrs. Bouncer, I didn't know it was so late!" he said, as that lady returned with the breakfast, and not a particular amiable look on her thin face.

"Well, I should think not, sir; and such a beautiful morning as this, too."

But without taking any notice of the implied reproof, Harry, drawing his dressing-gown round him, proceeded to uncover the food, which, not seeming particularly tempting, he pushed from him, and then commenced to crack an egg.

"Six months old if a day," he growled, sending it in the same direction as the bacon at the same time that he gulped down a cup of tea with evident enjoyment; after which he gave his attention to the letters which had arrived by that morning's post, and several o-

these being encased in suspicious blue envelopes were contemptuously disregarded, whilst he eagerly broke the seal of one written in a friendly and familiar hand.

It was headed, "Baxton Hall, August 11, '84," and ran thus:—

"DEAR HARRY,—

"You must be broiled alive in town, with the mercury eighty in the shade. Come down, old fellow; we shall be delighted to see you, and a country blow will do you all the good in the world. Shan't take a refusal, so shall expect you by the 1.30 train from London to-morrow, or the next day at the latest. Shall be on the look-out for you at the station, so don't disappoint.—Yours truly,

"FRED HARTREE."

"I shall go," decided Harry, refolding the letter. "As he says, the heat here is unbearable, and I feel deuced seedy, there's no mistake; besides, it will be an easy way of throwing off the set."

By this set, Harry meant to infer, that he had, through an overflow of animal spirits, and a superfluity of spare cash, been led into excesses through the evil influence of a society into which he had recklessly plunged, the consequences of which had begun already to leave its marks in the tell-tale lines beginning to show even now on his youthful countenance, whilst his true friends unsuccessfully strove to make him aware of his folly.

Amongst the latter was Fred Hartree, who had loved him from the time they were merry open-hearted boys at school, and who, at the risk of breaking the friendship of years, had endeavoured to open his eyes to the fact that those men who haunted his footsteps were merely making him the tool of their own extravagances.

His father, his sole surviving parent, after repeatedly paying his debts, had vowed on the next occasion that he was appealed to for that purpose that he would disown him altogether—a threat which had been made and never

carried out so frequently that Harry knew he had but to present himself as the prodigal son, and the old gentleman would not only again release him from the hands of the Jews, but would kill the fatted calf in his honour.

But with Harry all his follies and graver faults fell into insignificance with his dearest friends, when once in their society; for blame him as they might there was an irresistible pleasure in his presence which none could withstand, establishing him as a favourite wherever he went.

Fred Hartree was but two years his senior, but at thirty he was a staid, business man, whilst Harry was as fond of a joke, and full of fun, as though he was a lad of eighteen; but this very difference in their dispositions appeared to link them closer together, and create that influence which the former held over him.

"What a relief it will be to have a little quiet!" Harry continued, after again perusing his friend's letter, "for I have been going it rather;" and looking in the glass, on rising from the table, the reflection of his handsome face seemed to afford him anything but satisfaction, he looking, to use his own expression, "as though he had been drawn through a horse-pond."

"I am not at home to anyone this morning, Bouncer," he said, as a double knock resounded on his outer door, and after the innocent untruth had been faithfully conveyed to the great annoyance of the early visitor, that lady was informed that her services were required to pack her master's portmanteau, as he was leaving town that evening, when he dispatched a hasty telegram to Fred to inform him of his arrival.

To wait till the morrow with Harry would have been impossible. Everything he undertook was carried out on the spur of the moment, and had he waited until the time specified in the letter of the former the chances were ten to one he would never have

put in an appearance at Baxton Hall; besides, the resolve which was now firm in his mind to break with the fast companions who were leading him on the easy road to ruin would, did he not put it into force at once, have inevitably evaporated with the setting sun.

The other letters cursorily glanced over, Harry proceeded to answer the same with promises of speedy settlement, thus giving to his mind a temporary relief, if not to that of his creditors, when a knock, gentler than the former, resounded on the outer door, and Mrs. Bouncer entered soon after to say that a young lady wanted to see him, and she wouldn't take no for an answer—an assertion confirmed by the young lady herself, who had followed in the landress's footsteps.

"I knew the old woman was telling a falsehood," she said, as, on the latter withdrawing, she clasped Harry's extended hand. "I am in such trouble, I could not help coming to you; but you are not cross, dear, are you?" and she looked into her companion's face, on which the annoyance her visit had caused was plainly visible, whilst the tears started to her eyes.

"Oh! no," replied the latter, the tone betraying the words he uttered, "I am not cross, but I don't like girls coming to my chambers uninvited. I told you if you wanted anything to write."

"I know you did," said the girl, dropping into the chair he placed for her, "but I could not tell you all in a letter," and she burst into tears.

"Well, don't cry," he added. "I hate to see women cry," and he moved impatiently towards the room where Mrs. Bouncer was supposed to be occupied in her packing operations, but who had moved as suspiciously from the keyhole of the one he had just quitted that she was informed that would do, she could go, and, after seeing the good lady safe off the premises, Harry returned to his visitor, who was vainly endeavouring to restrain her emotion.

"For Heaven's sake, Hetty, don't make a scene!" he said, seating himself opposite to the weeping girl.

"Don't make a scene, indeed!" she replied, through her tears, "and you hate to see women cry? Yes, yes, that is always what a man says. Harry Wingrove, I wish I had never seen you; you almost make me say I hate you."

She had risen from her chair now, her eyes flashing through the moisture pervading them, whilst the colour deepened beneath her clear olive skin.

"I can't help it if you do," was the reply "but I don't think you will," changing suddenly; and there was the old charm in his voice, which was as music to the girl's ears, which made her forget her misery, her position, all but the love she felt for him.

"Come here," he added, motioning her to a seat on the couch he occupied, "and tell me quietly all about it. I daren't it is nothing very dreadful after all."

"You are not angry with me, then?" she answered, a happy smile, like a transient gleam of sunlight passing over her countenance, as doing his bidding she leant her head on his broad shoulder.

"Poor little girl!" he said, soothingly, while passing his hand over her soft dark curls. "I am not angry. Now, then, tell me this dreadful trouble, and we will see what can be done."

"And you do love me, Harry?" she asked. "Have I not told you so?" he replied, eagerly, imprinting a kiss on her smooth forehead, and in truth at the moment Harry felt there was no one so dear to him as this little milliner's assistant, and he thought no girl he had ever seen half so handsome.

"And you will marry me, Harry?" she continued.

"Marry you! Of course, some day, Hetty, but there's plenty of time to think about that. You are only eighteen, but," and he quickly

changed the subject, "you have not told me what you came to me for this morning."

"To tell you I have left Madame's. The forewoman told her that a gentleman brought me home long after hours last night, and she dismissed me this morning, saying such cruel things, too," and Hetty again burst into tears. "Not that I care for her, the horrid old thing," she added, passionately; "but my mother, oh! my poor mother, it will break her heart."

"Nonsense, Hetty, it will be all right; you will soon get another situation, and till you do neither you nor your mother shall want, you know that," said Harry, drawing her towards him.

"Oh! it is not that, it is not that," she cried, lifting her head from his shoulder, whilst she whispered in his ear, after which they both remained wrapt in their own thoughts, Hetty's sobs alone breaking the silence.

"Have you been to your mother since leaving Madame?" Harry asked, after awhile.

"No," was the reply; "I felt I must see you first."

"Well, then, go home now like a good girl. I am going out of town for a short time. That will keep you going for a week or so," and he placed two five-pound notes in her hand, "and when I come back we will see what can be done."

"But oh! Harry!" she cried, letting the notes fall on her lap as she encircled her arms round his neck, "tell me you will make me your wife then? You will, won't you, darling?" she pleaded, her soft eyes looking into his, her whole soul resting on his answer.

But it came so low, so indistinct, that she knew not its import, as, resting alone on the faith she had in him, whose love was her very life, she thought but of the bliss of that moment in which he held her in his arms, and imprinted burning kisses on her ruby lips; and then, with the memory alone to which to cling, she went from him to meet the sneers of a cold, hard world, and the sorrowful face of a loving parent.

And Harry, for the moment not less sorrowful than she, listened until her footsteps died away on the last stair, when going to the window he waited until she should pass on her way to the street; and then, as in doing so, she, lifting her sad face to where he stood, her countenance suddenly beamed with a glad smile, he wondered it, after all, he did not love this poor little girl, but the hot summer afternoon was waning into the cooler evening, and with a hasty look at the hour he adjourned to the inner room to complete the packing arrangements Mrs. Bouncer had commenced.

CHAPTER II.

BAXTON.

BAXTON being but a village across country boasted of nothing beyond its ancient church, round which the ivy clung in affectionate embrace, covering beneath its evergreen mantle the decay which time had brought to the holy edifice. In close proximity was the Inn, from which a coach started twice a week to the market town, a distance of ten miles.

The Hall, not less ancient than the church, though, to a certain extent modernised, was but a short distance from the same, and was considered to rank first amongst the gentlemen's residences which were dotted here and there in the little hamlet, leaving ample room for the humble farmers' and more humble labourers' homes, without interfering with the spacious lawns and plantations surrounding the former.

The inhabitants of Baxton, however, went with the times, and a branch line had been proposed to extend some forty miles or so from Statham, but when the same could only be accomplished by cutting through the park of Sir Anthony Tyford, a rich baronet whose estate was but a short distance from Baxton,

the proposition was soon abandoned, and the old coach still retained in office, and when the great folks expected friends by train a conveyance was sent for them.

Thus, on the present occasion, Fred Hartree was awaiting the arrival of the London express, having immediately on receipt of Harry's telegram started with dogcart and servant to meet him.

He had arrived but a few moments when the whistle sounding and a certain bustle on the platform announced that "she was a comin'," as the porter replied, in answer to Fred's question as to whether it was the train from London that was expected, and a second or two after he was grasping the hand of his boyhood's friend.

"So glad to see you, old fellow!" he said. "I was so delighted that I wasn't out when your telegram arrived. Here, John," he continued, addressing the servant, "put Mr. Wingrove's portmanteau in the trap," when linking his arm within that of the latter he led him through the station.

"How delicious it is here after London!" said Harry, when, after returning his friend's greeting, and having seated themselves in the dog-cart, they were speeding along the country road, a fresh, cool breeze stirring the branches of the stately trees which extended over their heads, and waving the golden oats still untouched by scythe or sickle.

"What a lovely place!" said Harry, as the grounds of Sir Anthony Tyford, with its rich belt of foliage, through which the mansion but peeped within, came in view, its slope of velvet green extending to where the silver water glistened beneath the rays of the reclining sun.

"Yes, Queenie was a lucky girl to have her lot cast in such pleasant places," was the reply.

"Queenie! You don't mean your little sister!" exclaimed his companion, "with whom I used to be a great favourite in the happy holidays I have so often passed at your father's in the old school days?"

"The very same, my dear fellow," Fred answered. "You must know when the governor was going he made her promise to marry his old friend Sir Anthony Tyford, a promise, I believe, the latter drew from my father in consideration that an enormous debt which the latter had incurred would be thus cancelled."

"And was Queenie agreeable to this mercantile arrangement?" asked Harry.

"You mustn't put it exactly in that light," said Fred, giving the horse such an unexpected and undeserved taste of the whip that the man sitting with arms folded at the back of the trap was nearly precipitated into the roadway.

"Queenie can scarcely be looked on in the sense of a martyr," Fred continued. "She had no one she was sweet on, and by merely uttering that magic word 'yes' she becomes mistress of a splendid estate, with a rent-roll of thirty thousand a-year, and a husband who dotes on her like an old idiot, and gratifies her every whim."

But Harry made no reply, his mind wandering back to those happy days, scarcely ten years since, when Queenie, a little fairy with long golden curls and very short frocks, was almost his constant companion in the bird-nesting and rabbit-hunting expeditions when on a visit to Baxton Hall, but his reverie was soon at an end, the old church, and other familiar landmarks, assuring him they had nearly arrived at their destination.

"Here we are at last!" said Fred, drawing up where a large gate of massive iron divided them from the cool, rich green of the grounds, in the midst of which stood the house itself; and then, as the groom opened and closed the same after them, they dashed up the drive to where, at the sound of their wheels, the door of the latter was opened hospitably to receive them.

Mrs. Hartree came into the entrance hall to welcome them, followed by Nellie and

Georgie, who were as pleased as Fred at again seeing his friend.

"We have seen some sad changes since you were with us last, Mr. Wingrove," said the former, when, after the first greetings were over and Harry had returned from the dressing-room to which Fred had led him, they were all assembled in the pretty drawing-room, through the windows of which sweet-scented flowers exhale their fragrance from the little parterre on which they opened.

"And one amongst them not calling me Harry as you used to do, Mrs. Hartree," he said.

"Well, Harry," smiled that lady, "let me see, it must be eight years ago since you were with us!"

"Quite that, mamma," the girls chimed in; "poor papa has been dead now nearly seven, and Queenie has been married two."

"Of course; dear, how time flies?" Mrs. Hartree continued, addressing her guest. "Fanny Queenie; you remember her Mr. Wingrove?"

"Harry," he corrected. "Perfectly; how could I forget my little playmate?"

"Well, she is married; and the youngest of the family—a bride at sixteen. Queenie Hartree no longer, but Lady Tyford," added Mrs. Hartree, with pride.

"It was very young to become a wife," said Harry; "but I sincerely hope she is happy."

A servant now entering to announce dinner the conversation dropped, though Harry had not failed to see that the former appeared relieved at the interruption, to avoid giving an answer.

It was already late, and the quiet, country evening soon came to a close. Nellie and Georgie, when the gentlemen rejoined them after their wine, singing songs and duets at Harry's especial request, which seemed to him like the voices of old friends.

But there was a void in the home circle, throwing a gloom over his feelings which he was unable to cast from him. And he was not sorry, on the ladies retiring for the night, to accept Fred's invitation to smoke a cigar on the terrace before following their example.

"We must drive over to Sir Anthony's to-morrow," said the latter, while filling the air with the aroma of his havannah. "What a surprise it will be to Queenie!"

"I have no doubt but that Lady Tyford has not only entirely forgotten me, but will also fail to recognise me when we meet."

"Not she," Fred replied, confidently; "for you must know you were a great favourite with her ladyship, and I'll bet you ten to one in double the number of years she would still remember the face of her cavalier as she used to call you. Another turn," he added, "and I think we had better get indoors. You must be tired, old fellow, and it is growing damp and chilly."

Harry, to whom early hours were unknown, felt anything but disposed to follow his friend's advice. But acting on the principle that when in Rome you must do as Rome does, it was not long before his head was resting on the downy pillow in the airy room allotted him.

Sleep was out of the question; it kept aloof from his eyelids; until, entirely worn out with tossing and turning, he at last fell into a slumber as the grey streaks of early dawn streamed into his apartment.

And in his sleep he saw Queenie, surrounded by water, which rose higher and higher until nothing but her fair face was visible; whilst an old man, with tears streaming down his wrinkled face, stood on the river's bank stretching out his arms, but unable to save her. And Harry thought she cast her eyes imploringly to him, and he dashed into the stream, enrolling her in his strong arms as the waves were about to close over her for ever.

But when he laid her on the soft grass to gaze into the eyes uplifted to his own, they were not the eyes of Queenie. It was the white, dead face of Hetty Linton!

CHAPTER III.

QUEENIE.

A GENTLE knock at his door soon aroused Harry to the fact that it was broad daylight, with a glorious sun pouring his golden rays into his room in defiance of the Venetian blinds which endeavoured to keep them out.

"It is nine o'clock, sir!" was the servant's response to his inquiry respecting the hour, as she placed the hot-water jug on the washing-stand, when no sooner had the door closed after her than he hastily arose, feeling sure that it was fearfully late for Baxton. And he was not sorry on descending to the breakfast-room to find that he was not the last—a self-congratulation, however, which he did not long enjoy, as Helen, after the morning's salutations, proceeded to perform the rôle of hostess at the same time that she apologised for her mother's absence.

"Mamma is not very strong, and trusts you will excuse her," she said, "as she always breakfasts in her room."

"Oh! I am so sorry," Harry replied, "as I am afraid I have kept you all waiting."

"Don't apologise, Harry," said Fred; "we have enjoyed an hour in the garden, quite as pleasant before as after breakfast."

They remained some time over the morning's repast; the girls, in their cambric dresses, looking as fresh as the roses they had placed at their throats, with the dew still on their leaves; whilst scenes in the happy past were recalled from their graves and merrily discussed.

But still Harry could not get that wretched dream out of his mind; until later on, when left to himself for a short while, he found himself wondering whether it was reality, and he was not sorry when Fred, re-entering the room, proposed that they should drive to Tyford Park before lunch.

"Then, of course, we shall not see you till dinner, if then?" said Georgie, coming in at the same time; "for Queenie is sure to insist on your staying the day."

"Perhaps not," Fred answered.

And a short time later the dog-cart was brought to the hall door, and Harry with his friend mounted the same.

"Good-bye; give our love to Queenie," cried Helen and Georgie, kissing their hands to their brother, to which Harry responded by waving his as they dashed down the drive.

There was a slight breeze which ran along the golden corn and made the leaves to rustle in the branches over their heads, whilst the fleecy clouds skimmed the dark blue of the firmament above; and in the enjoyment which the beauty of the summer morning instilled in his breast, Harry forgot all forebodings of ill, forgot the secret which the girl whose dead face he had seen in his dream had whispered in his ear; remembering alone that he was on his way to Queenie, the playmate and little love of his youth, surrounded by the beauties of nature, and in the possession of all that was necessary to make life enjoyable.

Fred was in the best of spirits, as lively as his companion, making the drive appear even too short when Tyford Park came in view.

The lodge gates were quickly opened, and on emerging from the dense growth of shrubbery all the beauties of the former became visible.

The large expanse of velvet sward, on which gigantic oaks reared their stately branches, beneath which the sheep grazed in happy indolence; whilst trees of smaller growth were dotted here and there until they reached a stream of silvery water, shining and shimmering in the sunlight.

A servant in knee-breeches and silk stockings answered the door on their arrival at the mansion itself, who immediately conducted them to a spacious drawing-room, opening to a conservatory, where hot-house flowers in rare beauty exhale their fragrance from within.

An old gentleman rose from his seat by the

open window as Mr. Hartree was announced, who cordially grasped Fred's hand, whilst he bowed in recognition of Harry's introduction. He was between sixty and seventy, and the latter could not suppress a slight start when, in the wrinkled face and white hair of Sir Anthony, he recognised the man in his dream, but the kindly welcome he gave him to Tyford Park, and the benevolent expression visible on his countenance, made his heart warm towards him, notwithstanding the sacrifice he considered Queenie had been called upon to make.

"Lady Tyford will be here in a moment," he said, addressing himself to Harry, whom Fred had explained was a very old friend of the former, in fact, children together, and, before the same could make any reply, the door opened, and Queenie entered.

Queenie! the same fairy, but of larger growth, her golden hair rippling unconfined in massive waves over the white morning dress she wore, as it had done over the short frocks of eight years before, but the eyes, Harry thought, seemed sadder, until on seeing Fred the old light returned to them, and the colour deepened beneath her fair skin.

"I should have known you anywhere, Mr. Wingrove!" she said, as she grasped the extended hand of the former, in answer to her brother's query if she recognised an old friend, and then she proceeded to tell Sir Anthony some of the adventures in which she and Harry had taken part. "Of course, you will stay the day?" she said, ringing the bell, to give orders that the horse and trap should be taken round to the stables.

"Of course, if you say so," laughed Sir Anthony; then, turning to Harry, "for whatever Lady Tyford says is always law, Mr. Wingrove," he added.

"Queenie still, I see," answered the latter; but as the familiar name crossed his lips, an expression passed over the Baronet's countenance which made him address her but as Lady Tyford for the remainder of their visit.

"You must come and see some of my pets," she said, addressing Harry, "you know how fond I always was of dumb animals, and the weather is too beautiful to pass the time in the house. Are you coming, dear?" she added, rising.

The latter sentence was addressed to Sir Anthony, but begging to be excused, owing to rheumatism, from which he was a great sufferer, Fred agreed to remain with the latter.

"Come along then, Mr. Wingrove," said her ladyship, as, stepping from the open window, she bid Harry follow.

"Had you grown out of the knowledge of my mother and sisters?" she asked, while they passed on through tastefully-arranged flower-beds, exhaling the richest perfumes, to where, through a gate leading to a clean paved yard, they came to the kennels of Queenie's canine pets.

"I don't think so," Harry replied, as a combined bark of welcome from canine throats heralded the approach of the dog's mistress; "but then, you must know, they expected me, which you did not, Lady Tyford."

She turned from the caress of a large Newfoundland, which had placed his nose in her hand.

"Please don't call me that," she said, "it sounds so formal!"

"But you see, our positions are so changed now," Harry answered, "and I do not think Sir Anthony relished my calling you Queenie."

"Ah! I forgot!" she added; "but those were such happy days, it seems so sad to grow old!" then, with a sigh, she led on to where expectant pots awaited her approach.

"I cannot admit feeling particularly aged, Lady Tyford," smiled her companion, "although, I must say, I wish those days could return. Just think, eight years! and it seems but yesterday that you were my Queenie and I your cavalier; and Georgie tells me you have been married two years out of that!"

"Yes, two years, and it seems a hundred

The sentence had escaped her lips almost before she was aware of what she was saying, but it was not lost upon Harry, who, casting one steadfast look on the sad young face, caused the colour to mount to her very temples.

"Don't mind me, Harry," she said, in her old childish tones, "I did not mean what I said. Sir Anthony is all that is good and kind, and I am very happy—" but her eyes meeting those of her companion, the word remained unfinished, whilst they became suffused with tears.

"Queenie! my Queenie still!" Harry exclaimed, clasping her hand, forgetting for the time all but the sympathy her evident unhappiness had awakened in his breast, a pity akin to love. "Tell me I am mistaken that you are really happy."

"I ought to be," she answered, "ought I not?" and she smiled through her tears. "See what a lovely home I have, nothing denied me to make my life a perfect paradise on earth, money, jewels—all but love."

It was Harry who interrupted her thus, allowed his feelings to escape, whilst she, foreseeing the danger into which she was gliding, abruptly changed the subject, schooling herself the while to control her own, so that in future she should not be tempted to let him see how painfully her wings beat against the bars of her golden cage.

Sir Anthony with Fred had removed from the drawing-room to a shady seat in the garden, on their return from visiting the stables and aviaries, and during the remainder of the day Queenie appeared to have fully recovered her spirits, endeavouring to show by her actions that she would that Harry should forget the conversation of the morning, and the latter even thought he must have been mistaken in deeming her unhappy, when later on she stood clinging to her husband's side, as he and Fred passed out in the summer twilight on their way homeward.

CHAPTER IV.

DELIVERANCE.

THE hot August days passed quickly by, gliding stealthily on towards September, and Harry was still the guest of the Hartrees, when he was not that of Sir Anthony and Lady Tyford.

The Baronet had taken quite a fancy to him, and it was arranged that he should leave Baxton Hall, and make one of the shooting party who were invited to Tyford Park for the first of the ensuing month and several days after.

"I hope you won't do any mischief with that gun," laughed Fred, as he suddenly came upon Harry busily engaged in rubbing up the rifle he himself had lent him for the occasion.

"I don't think so," was the smiling rejoinder, "not even to the partridges, for I fear I am not much of a shot."

"Well, supposing then you put it away and prepare for our visit," Fred answered, looking at his watch, "for Queenie will expect us to dinner at six, and Sir Anthony prides himself on his punctuality."

So a short time later, after bidding good-bye to Mrs. Hartree and her daughters, they were on their way to the residence of the former.

There was a goodly company arrived when they put in an appearance, from which Queenie came forward to greet them on their arrival, looking very girlish and pretty in a dress of soft, cream-coloured cashmere, with blood-red roses nestling amid the rich lace at her bosom.

The weather had been delightful, and good sport was anticipated on the opening day, which the evening prognosticated would be glorious.

And so it was. On the morrow, when long before the sun had reached the meridian, the guns of the sportsmen told of the death of many a feathered victim.

Queenie, when left alone on their departure, had adjourned to her favourite seat beneath a shady chestnut with a book, in the hope of whiling away the time until her husband and guests should return to lunch.

The former had offered to remain with her, but she would not hear of it. Truth to say, she was only too glad that Sir Anthony should for the time being forget his pains and aches, and thus leave her to her own thoughts.

She knew not how long she had been seated beneath the spreading tree, whilst her thoughts wandered back to the happy days of her childhood, as she dreamily listened to the hum of the insects and the occasional bark from the dogs when a stranger would advance to the servants' entrance, mingled with the notes of the birds trilling in the branches, until cries proceeding from the paved yard where the kennels of the former were aroused her attention, and a few moments later she became aware that something unusual had taken place. But not until she saw in the distance Hector, her favourite, advancing from the path leading to the same, followed by men with bludgeons, did she realise the danger which threatened her.

"In, my lady, in!" shouted the latter, as she started to her feet, and her white dress made her visible to the pursuers of the rabid animal.

But paralysed with the great fear which had overcome her, Queenie stood as though rooted to the spot. In vain the men gesticulated, in vain they implored her to fly to where, through the open window of the drawing-room, she would have found safety; whilst with dilated eyes, and stricken with horror, she remained immovable.

And on, on, with foaming mouth and cruel teeth, displayed in all their ferocity, the dog tore on, seemingly intent on the victim who would so soon have felt the agony left by those merciless fangs.

Breathless and panting, the men used every power to overtake him with the weapons which in their haste they had picked up when first he broke from his kennel. But Hector's limbs, to which madness had given extra strength, seemed to fly over the ground, the clanking of his broken chain adding to his rage; while within a few feet of the mistress who but a day ago had fondled and caressed him he made a final rush at her fair throat, when at the same moment that her terrified scream filled the air there came the report of a gun, and the savage brute rolled over, his life-blood dying the whiteness of her dress as Queenie fell motionless to the ground.

"Take the beast away," said Harry to the men, who had now come up, as he gave a kick to the dead animal, "and send Lady Tyford's maid here at once."

Then kneeling on the soft grass by the side of the unconscious girl, he used every endeavour to restore her to animation.

"Look up, Queenie!" he cried. "Thank Heaven, you are safe!"

Then chafing her hands, which had become so cold, he bent down until his tawny moustache almost swept her colourless face; and he knew in that moment, when she lay so still before him, how dear she had become to him during those glad summer days.

And reverently raising her fair head upon his arm he imprinted a kiss upon her white forehead, and was about to replace it on the green sward when, with a gentle sigh, she once more unclosed her eyes, and looked into those of her deliverer.

"You here, Harry!" she said. "And the dog?"

"Is dead, Queenie," was the reply.

"Thank Heaven!" she answered, as, assisted by the former, she rose to her feet. And she would have continued her inquiries had not the appearance of the maid put an end to further questions, when, leaning on the arm of Harry, followed by the latter, they entered the drawing-room.

But Queenie did not long require her services, and after she had been comfortably

ensconced on one of the sofas, where the breeze from the open window could softly fan her pale cheek, she was dismissed.

"How came you to be so near as to be able to save me?" the former asked, lifting her eyes to where Harry sat on a chair by her side.

"Being rather ashamed of my prowess as a sportsman," Harry returned, "I thought I would return before, as Fred said, I did any mischief with a gun which in every other respect was useless to me. And as I neared where you were sitting, hearing the shouts of the men, I hastened my footsteps, to see in a moment the peril in which you stood. I cannot describe my feelings, Queenie, fearing that in my endeavour to kill the dog I might wound you. But it was no time for hesitation, and I fired, thank Heaven! for once with good effect."

"How can I ever repay you, Harry?" she asked.

"Queenie, was not the life I saved dearer to me than my own?"

And he looked into her uplifted eyes with the lovelight beaming from his own; but she made no answer further than to let her hand, which he had taken, rest for a second within his; whilst the colour surged to her temples.

"Fate is cruel!" he added, "cruel as death itself! Oh, Queenie! how I would have loved you, how I even love you now!"

"Hush!" she said. "It is not kind to speak to me like that, Harry; we cannot fight against destiny."

"Ah, destiny!" he repeated bitterly. "But one word more, Queenie. You asked me how you could repay me; do so, dearest, by telling me that my love is returned."

"I will, Harry," was the reply, "but on one condition."

"And that?" he asked, drawing her nearer to him.

"That we part, until—it may be years—when the love I bear you shall no longer be a guilty one. Oh, my heart! my heart!" she added, breaking down with the emotion she could no longer control; "it will break! it will break! it will break!" and burying her face in the cushions she sobbed like a child; then raising it suddenly, as the sound of footsteps fell on her ear, she dashed aside the falling tears, when, with a piteous pleading in her eyes, such as Harry never forgot, she gazed for one moment on him who was so dear to her; their lips met in a last fond kiss, and as she released her Sir Anthony Tyford entered the room.

He was accompanied by Fred Hartree, a servant having been hastily despatched to where they were shooting to apprise them of Queenie's narrow escape, but as the Baronet took in the scene before him a strange look passed over his countenance, but there was no anger in his tone when grasping the hand of his wife's deliverer. He blessed him for having saved her life, but sad despair seemed to spread itself over his countenance, and when he advanced to where Queenie still sat, he gazed on her with eyes from which all the happiness had fled, as though the veil had been lifted, and he knew for the first time the fool's paradise in which he lived.

"I shall never again say you can't handle a gun, Harry," Fred said.

"Provided I have nothing smaller than a dog to aim at," was the laughing rejoinder, and then, as the remainder of the party had returned, lunch was announced.

Queenie begged to be excused; her nerves were all unstrung owing to the shock she had received; and so they left her after having seen her comfortably ensconced amongst the silken cushions, Harry alone pleading to be allowed to bring her a glass of wine.

"I shall leave Baxton to-morrow," he said, when a few moments later he returned with the same, "and will never return, Queenie, until I can do so to claim your hand, unless—"

"Unless what?" she asked.

"You should send for me before," he added.

But he almost wished the words unuttered, as he noted the expression of horror which passed over her lovely countenance at the thought of what those words implied.

"No, no, Harry!" she said, "never let such a thought enter your mind, if you truly love me. Think of me, dear, in the time that we are parted as a true and faithful wife—in love alone false to my husband, jealously guarding his honour as my own, so that if in the future our lives should be passed together I should not be unworthy of your love."

"Heaven bless you, Queenie!" he said, and then he left her, she to stamp out from her life that love for which she yearned, he to bury it in the change of an ever-changing existence.

CHAPTER V.

"Are you quite certain you cannot further extend your visit?" asked Mrs. Hartree, when Harry, on his return from Tyford Park, had told her that he should be obliged to leave them the following day.

The episode in which he had played so prominent a part having been fully related to that lady by her son. Harry was looked on as a hero by the family at Baxton Hall, who could not sufficiently express to him the gratitude they felt for his having saved the life of their darling Queenie.

But Fred was not satisfied within himself respecting the motive which had so suddenly induced Harry to return to London, notwithstanding that he was obliged to accept his explanation that important business urged him in so doing.

Harry, he knew, never was one to allow business, important or otherwise, to interfere with pleasure, which went far in his own mind to confirm a suspicion he had entertained.

"Better for both that he should not remain," Fred soliloquised, and he was not sorry to hear Harry, in answer to his mother's entreaties that he should still remain their guest, respectfully decline.

Five weeks had passed since he had left town, and on his arrival at his chambers, where Mrs. Bouncer had kept everything in order during his absence, quite a heap of correspondence awaited him.

"That young woman was here the other morning," that good lady informed him in answer to his inquiries respecting anyone having called, "and she asked if I knew your address."

"Yes," Harry replied, whilst giving a cursory glance at his many letters, and very little attention to Mrs. Bouncer's information, until one in a female hand seemed to arouse his curiosity, and he hastily tore it open.

"Is there anything more you'll be wanting to-night, sir?" asked the laundress. "You'll find your sheets well aired," when Harry answering in the negative, with that satisfactory assurance she left.

As the door closed after her, he again referred to the open letter before him.

"49, Lupus-street.

"DEAR HARRY" (it ran) "come to me here. I can see you at eight this evening, but don't fail. I am so miserable! Oh! what will become of me? Mother even has turned against me, when I told her the reason of my losing my employment. She will not touch the money you gave her, telling me she would starve first. Do tell me that you will keep your word to your wretched

"HETTY."

For some time Harry sat in deep thought as to his future proceedings.

"Poor little girl!" he said. "I am a scoundrel, and I confess it. Yes, I will keep my promise."

And then Queenie's fair face, with the blue eyes he loved so well, arose before him, shak-

ing to its foundation the resolution he had so recently formed, whilst thoughts of the barrier he was about to raise between him and a future which he anticipated resolved themselves in his mind.

"Curse my folly!" he cried, "to have been led away by a gipsy face and velvety eyes, never knowing till now what true love really meant! But it is no use fretting over spilt milk!" on the reflection of which homely adage Harry determined at once to set out for Mrs. Linton's apartments.

That lady was in terrible grief when he arrived at Lupus-street. She had only just returned from a vain search for her daughter, who had left her home but two days previous, and Harry taking that grief into consideration, and the share he had had in causing the same, listened patiently to the invectives heaped upon him.

"But have you no idea where Hetty would find a home?" he asked.

"If I had, do you think I should go trapezing over half London seeking her?" she answered, snappishly, adding, "it is such men as you who deserve hanging, it is!"

And at the moment Harry felt not only that he fully endorsed her opinion, but that he was very much in the humour to carry out the process without assistance.

"Maybe," he replied, logically; "but now that I am here, Mrs. Linton, not only willing but anxious to do all in my power to atone to your daughter for the wrong I have done her, don't you think it would be wiser to help me in every way you can to find her and bring her back than to waste time in blaming me for the past."

"Perhaps so," replied the widow, with the tears streaming down her face, and then she entered into full particulars respecting Hetty's flight, and the most probable steps she would be likely to take, when Harry lost no time in acting on her suggestions in endeavouring to discover the whereabouts of the unhappy girl, until, worn out with the unsuccessful issue of his efforts, he gave way to the gloomy fears which haunted him respecting her fate.

It was then that that dread dream returned so vividly to his imagination, and as each morning dawned he awakened to the fear that the same should be realised.

Thus a fortnight passed, and notwithstanding his inquiries in every direction, utilising the press also to the end he had in view, there was no response, and Hetty had gone as completely out of his life as though the green grass was waving over her early grave.

Further search he deemed useless, and feeling nothing remained to him now but to await the issues of events. Harry felt he could do no more than console her mother in her great grief.

Another week thus fled, when one morning Mrs. Bouncer aroused him earlier than usual to say a lady wanted to see him immediately.

"Her name?" he asked, hastily donning dressing-gown and slippers, and when in reply that of Mrs. Linton's fell on his ear a presentiment of evil as speedily rushed on his imagination.

"Oh! Mr. Wingrove," cried the latter, on his presenting himself before her, whilst she vainly endeavoured to control her emotion, "come with me at once; my poor child is dead!"

"Dead! Mrs. Linton," Harry ejaculated. "What grounds have you for thinking that?" but even as he asked the question he felt the warm blood forsake his face, whilst the hand with which he grasped the paper she extended to him became cold and clammy.

"Read that," she sobbed, pointing to a paragraph in which the description of a girl whose body had been that morning recovered from the river was fully given.

"We may yet be mistaken, Mrs. Linton," Harry answered, "but I will go with you at once, though Heaven grant in this dead girl you will fail to identify poor Hetty."

But a few moments elapsed before the former was fully prepared to accompany the

weeping mother, and on emerging into the street a cab was quickly summoned to convey them to their destination.

But few words passed between them, as each wrapt in their own sad thoughts remained almost silent, until arrived at the termination of their sad journey Harry assisted his companion to alight, each feeling a dread certainty of their worst fears being realised, moved with sad and heavy hearts to where, on the cold slab in that parish mortuary, the dead lay awaiting identification; and as an old covering was removed from the face of the senseless clay, a wild shriek rang through the vault, when in the disfigured corpse Mrs. Linton recognised the once beautiful features of her lost daughter.

Even to Harry, who at that moment felt a love for the dead girl stronger than he had ever experienced for her in the flush of her youth and beauty, there recurred the memory of that dream, in which as now he had seen the white motionless face upraised to Heaven, the lips he had pressed in the fulness of their loveliness now pale and cold, the once chiselled features swollen and disfigured, whilst he could even fancy the dark soft eyes then closed in death gazing reproachfully within his own.

"Come home," he said, in choking accents, turning to where his companion still stood convulsed in grief, "all that can be done shall be in respect to her blessed memory; it is only adding to your misery to remain longer, but"—he added, linking her arm within his own—"let me see you back to Lupus-street, then I will give directions that her body shall be conveyed to your home, to await the funeral arrangements."

After that one wild shriek the poor widow appeared stricken and dazed beneath her terrible blow; no tears now coursed down her pale, worn face, as with one agonising look bent on the features of her dead child she was unresistingly led by Harry from that chamber of horrors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAWN OF A NEW LOVE.

LOVE of man's life is but a part, and notwithstanding that Harry felt a deep regret for the sad fate of the girl to whom his love had been her whole existence, still, no sooner had the damp earth fallen on her coffin, the grave keeping for ever the secret which had cost her her life, than his thoughts reverted to Queenie—Queenie, divided from him as entirely as though it was she whom he had thus consigned to her last resting-place.

Some weeks had passed now since that day on which she lay lifeless in his arms. She had written him one passionate appeal, in which she begged him to forget her for ever, forget the words she had uttered, the remembrance of which she would strive to eradicate from her mind as the darkest page in her life's history; and Harry had read and re-read this letter, rebelling against the fate which had separated him from the only woman he had ever loved, and then placing it in his private drawer, thus cherished what was to be to him now nothing but a memory.

But a strange fascination led him again and again to take it from where he had placed it, once more to peruse the lines in which Queenie had confessed, sinful as she knew it to be, that the love he felt for her was as fully returned, but it was as wicked for her to cherish such for him now as it would be selfish, and inconsistent to ask him to waste the best years of his life on her account.

The November days of mist and fog had now thoroughly set in, and Harry, feeling more than usually miserable on this particular morning, sat before the fire, feeling too lazy to complete his toilet. He had attempted to read the daily paper, but after a few moments tossed it impatiently from him, when a sudden resolve appeared to take possession of his mind, and drawing writing materials

towards him, he commenced to pen a letter to Queenie.

"I know it is against her wish—almost command," he soliloquised; "but I do feel so wretched; it is the only solace left me, to let her know how vainly I have fought against this love which is making my life a misery."

And Queenie, not much less miserable than he, was seated in the drawing-room at Tyford Park, which looked out on the smooth lawn sparkling with beads left by the early frost (for there was no fog there), when Harry's letter was delivered to her.

Sir Anthony, who had but just recovered from a severe attack of sciatica, was reclining on the sofa drawn up to the fire, listening to the parliamentary news which Queenie was reading to him at his request, and as her eyes recognised the well-known hand she was about to place the letter in her dress, trusting to escape the notice of the Baronet, but before she could effect her purpose.

"Who is your correspondent, Queenie?" the latter asked.

"Well, I have scarcely looked," she replied, lowering her eyes to avoid meeting those of her husband, who was watching her intently.

But the deep flush which rose to her face was not unobserved by Sir Anthony, who raising himself on his elbows insisted on knowing who it was.

He had not forgotten that some in the same room when but a few months since he had learnt the truth which had taken all the sunshine out of his life, and he expressed no astonishment when Queenie, after having read Harry's letter, handed the same to him.

She could see his features work convulsively as he perused the same, his hand visibly shaking when returning it to her, but no word of reproach escaped his lips when bidding her bring her chair close to his side.

"Queenie," he asked, "can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, dear!" she exclaimed. "It is I who ought to plead for forgiveness. But, oh! Anthony," she added, "do not think I encouraged—"

"No, no," he answered before she could complete her sentence, "I know, darling. I knew on that day when Harry saved you from a dreadful death that whilst trampling beneath your feet the love you gave in return for his that your heart was breaking. You never loved me, Queenie; but it was I, darling, who was the fool to link May with December, though I love you with all the strength of a strong man's love."

"A love which I have never dishonoured. You believe me, Anthony?" she asked.

"As I believe in Heaven," was the reply; and drawing her fair head close to his own grey locks, "it won't be for long, dear," he continued. "I am an old man, and the sands of life are nearly run out."

"Don't say so—don't say so!" she cried. "You must not die, Anthony, you must not die, for I love you, indeed—indeed I do."

And in truth Queenie never till that moment knew that the love she had given Harry was but a passing dream, whilst her heart was safe in the keeping of her true and generous husband.

With all his infirmities, and his weight of years, he was dearer to her than all the world beside; and, as she nestled close to his side, all the tumultuous feelings of youth, that wild, young love which she had experienced for the playmate of her childhood, vanished beneath the holy calm which now rested upon her, whilst she shuddered at the remembrance of the precipice on which she had so lately tottered.

"And you really love me?" Sir Anthony asked, whilst, holding her for a moment from him, he gazed with a new-awakened happiness on her fair young face, and then pressed her to his bosom, enclosing his arms around her, as though even then he feared to have her taken from him.

But he had no reason to repeat the question, for pressing her full, ripe lips to his

Queenie imprinted such kisses on his aged face as love only could bestow.

And later on she penned a letter to Harry in reply to the one she had received, begging him, for her sake as for his own, to forget the folly of which she had been guilty, that her husband knew all, and even before she told him had not been ignorant of how matters stood. That, whilst forgiving her, he had awakened within her the knowledge that so firm a hold had he upon her affections that never again would he have reason to doubt her love, which for him was as strong as his for her. If ever they met again it would be as friends, a friendship which Sir Anthony himself was as anxious should continue as she was.

"Bah!" exclaimed Harry, when he came to the end of this letter which, on the following morning, was laid on his breakfast-table. "So much for woman's constancy! I always was the most unlucky devil out!" and he tossed it on one side.

Harry was not himself; he felt even more miserable than on the previous day, added to which he experienced an aching pain in his limbs, which, with a severe headache, did not tend to make him take things in a Christian-like spirit; and when he made an effort to rouse himself and go out, he found that he was quite incompetent to carry out his intention.

"By Jove! I feel queer!" he said, when Mrs. Bouncer entered the room, in answer to his summons.

"And you look so, too, sir!" was that lady's comforting assurance, adding, in reply to the symptoms he had described, that she shouldn't be surprised if he wasn't laid up, them bein' the very feelin' her old man had before he was taken ill and died.

"I think I'll see Atkin, however," Harry said, as he was seized with a shivering fit. "Just run round, Mrs. Bouncer, and ask him to look in."

To run, with Mrs. Bouncer, was equally as impossible as it was with her master at that moment, but, after the space of a half-hour, she arrived at the doctor's house, who, fortunately being at home at the time, was with Harry almost as soon as the good lady herself.

"You must get to bed as quickly as possible," was the order of the former, "and I will send round some medicine at once."

"A bad cold," he told Harry, but which, when giving his final directions to Mrs. Bouncer, he stated as a decided case of rheumatic fever, which opinion, before night, was fully confirmed, when the former lay racked with the pain of that malady.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW NURSE.

The next day Dr. Atkin found his patient considerably worse, and by night time Harry was in a state of delirium, for several days after being in danger of falling a victim to the disease as Mrs. Bouncer's "old man" had done before him.

The latter paid but little attention to his ravings, which she considered with most people ran in the same channel, but she was not sorry when a young woman offered to share the nursing with her, for she declared she was almost knocked up with the continued worry.

"How did you come to know Mr. Wingrove was ill?" she asked, when the latter presented herself at the chambers.

"I heard it," answered Polly Saunders, the name she gave, "from the paper shop where you have the *Times* every morning, as they knew I was looking for some employment, and I did not mind what."

"You are married?" asked Mrs. Bouncer, eyeing the applicant from head to foot.

"A widow," was the reply, her eyes drooping beneath their deep black fringes.

"Poor thing! and so young!" the other responded, but, being a kind-hearted creature,

she did not like to press her with further questioning, feeling sure, as she said afterwards, that it would be all right.

And a great help Polly proved to the landlady, never feeling weary or at least expressing fatigue, so hour after hour she attended the wants of the sick man, or watched beside him when, for a short time, he fell into a fitful slumber.

"I could but think I have seen you before," Mrs. Bouncer said one day, when together they sat in the room where Harry, for the first time, was calmly sleeping.

"I don't think so. I am quite sure you have not," the girl replied, hurriedly, motioning the while that their talking would disturb the invalid, though her doing so did not in any way alter the fact in Mrs. Bouncer's mind that they had previously met.

She had proved that the girl was honest—on that point she was quite satisfied—but that there was a mystery about her she also felt convinced.

Polly the meanwhile proved unfailing in attention to her duties, each day making her appearance with an apron spotlessly white over her black mourning dress, her black hair smoothed back neatly beneath her snowy cap.

But as Harry in his delirium would speak of his love for Queenie, even fancying at times that she was with him, when he would pour words of never-dying affection into her ear as he fancied she bent over him, the features of the youthful nurse became drawn as with pain, whilst her dark eyes would become suffused with tears.

It was on one of these occasions that Mrs. Bouncer unexpectedly entered the room. Polly was kneeling by the bedside, her hand enclosing that of the invalid, on which she pressed passionate kisses. But with a start she arose, endeavouring to conceal the tears which were coursing each other down her sad face.

"Lor, Polly!" Mrs. Bouncer ejaculated; "whatever are you doin' on?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied the girl; "but he does rave so, it makes one's heart bleed to hear him. And how he must love that young lady Queenie, of whom he speaks so much, poor gentleman!"

"Hetty," resounded from the sick bed; and Polly having drawn back, Mrs. Bouncer advanced to where Harry lay.

"What is it, sir?" she asked.

"Hetty," he repeated, "I thought I heard her voice; but no"—and he drew his hand across his hot forehead—"I remember she is dead, poor Hetty! And I killed her, my poor little girl!"

"Hush, sir!" Mrs. Bouncer said. "You must keep quiet," and she turned to ask Polly to hand her the lemon juice to moisten the invalid's lips.

But she had left the room, and when the former returned to the kitchen she was crying as if her heart would break.

"Well, I never!" said that lady, in astonishment. "If you are going to take on like this, Polly, you had better leave."

"No, no," said Polly. "I am so sorry I was so foolish, Mrs. Bouncer," when, drying her tears, she proceeded to arrange the tea-things. And although the latter frequently endeavoured to surprise her, Polly had so schooled herself as never again to let her feelings overcome her.

It was now three weeks since Harry had been taken ill, and although Dr. Atkin had combated successfully with the disease, still he had to fight against the prostration following on the same; whilst Harry, helpless as an infant, was still confined to his bed.

"Come a favour, doctor, will you?" he asked, the same time requesting him to forward a telegram to Baxton Hall; when, such being drawn out to his satisfaction, he thanked him, saying he should rest quiet now he had sent for his old friend. And early the next day Fred Hartree was by his bedside.

"My dear fellow, why on earth did you not send before?" said Fred, when the first shock

which he felt at the change he saw in Harry had passed. "I wondered how it was you had never written, but little thought you had been so ill."

"Oh! you would have been here before, Fred?" he asked.

"Most decidedly I should," was the reply.

"Heaven bless you!" Harry answered, grasping his friend's hands.

"My mother and sisters send their regrets," Fred added; and Harry longed to inquire of Queenie, but surmising only too truly that Fred knew why it was he left Baxton so suddenly, he merely satisfied himself by asking if Lady Tyford was well.

"Yes, thank you, old fellow!" the other answered. "Never saw her looking so well in my life. If ever there was an old man's darling Queenie is one, and as for Sir Anthony he grows younger every day; you might take a lease of his life."

Harry did not answer, but he felt his heart sink within him, whilst he knew instinctively that Fred was purposely digging a grave for any wild hopes he might have cherished.

"But, I say, Harry," he continued, after a pause, "you don't mean that young girl I saw just now has been your nurse through your illness?"

"Young girl!" Harry repeated, in astonishment. "I don't understand. I have had no one but Mrs. Bouncer; and I don't think even Lord Howe," he laughed, "would have styled her as a young girl, being on the shady side of sixty."

"Sixty! Rubbish!" Fred answered. "The girl I saw couldn't be more than eighteen—very dark, with a clear olive skin, and eyes of velvet shaded by deep black fringes—either Spanish or gipsy origin one would surmise."

As Fred ended his description Harry gave a start, as there came across his mind the recollection of such a face bending over him, which he had deemed but the phantasm of his disordered brain; and then, when he recalled the facts of events which occurred before his illness, he became satisfied that it was but a coincidence.

"Well, I shall see you again in the morning," said the former, pressing the hand of his friend. "Try and get a good night's rest. Why, I have been with you over two hours!" he added, referring to his watch, "and I will be with you by times, as I do not intend returning to Baxton until I have seen you safe on your legs again."

"You are very good, Fred!" Harry replied; and when the door closed on his friend he summoned Mrs. Bouncer to get him what he wanted for the night; but though he anxiously watched to see if the girl of whom Fred had spoken should make her appearance she did not appear, and he came to the conclusion that the latter must have been labouring under a delusion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"I suppose you won't be wanting me much longer now the master is getting so well?" said Polly to Mrs. Bouncer, when, after the lapse of another fortnight, Harry, having become convalescent, had (with the exception of being weak) so far recovered as to be able to resume his usual habits.

From the day he had become conscious to his surroundings, no persuasion on the part of the housekeeper would induce Polly to enter the room; so that Fred, who had now returned to Baxton, never having again referred to the subject, the supposed existence of his youthful nurse had entirely vanished from the mind of Harry; but the sound of voices in the adjoining kitchen being so unusual, it excited his curiosity.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know," he heard Mrs. Bouncer reply; "but, anyways, I'll ask Mr. Wingrove."

"No, don't, don't!" the other voice replied—"it doesn't matter, and I will go away now."

"Well, stop till I come back," Mrs. Bouncer

said, rising in answer to the bell, which then sounded from Harry's room.

"Who is that you are talking to?" the latter asked, on his housekeeper making her appearance.

"It is the young woman, sir, who, when you was so bad, I just took the liberty of engaging to help me, for, as you know, sir, I ain't so young as I was."

"That's all right, Mrs. Bouncer," Harry responded; "but what is the argument now?"

"Only about the remaining, sir," was the reply.

"Let her come in, and I will decide," Harry answered, but as Mrs. Bouncer still remained, "what are you waiting for?" he asked.

"Because, sir," the woman replied, hesitatingly, "I don't think as how she will, for ever since you came to yourself, sir, nothing I could do would she go anear you."

"Tell her she must."

It was some seconds after the order had been received before Mrs. Bouncer could prevail on Polly to obey it; but just as Harry's patience was almost exhausted a gentle knock was heard on his door, and in answer to his "Come in" she entered.

Turning at the same time, a shudder ran through the frame of Harry when his eyes met those of the girl who had nursed him through his illness; but recovering himself with an effort,—

"You have been assisting Mrs. Bouncer, I believe, when I was laid up?" he said.

"I have, sir," was the reply.

"Did you know her previously?" he asked.

"No, sir," she answered, lowering her eyes until the lashes almost swept her cheek. "But Mrs. Curtis, at the paper shop, knowing I was out of employment, as Mrs. Bouncer had spoken to her, thought I might suit."

"And would you like to remain?" he questioned.

"I—I don't know, sir," she replied. "No—no, I think I had better go," and Harry could see the tears as they hung on the long lashes.

"Do you live with your mother, then?"

The question appeared to recall her to herself.

"No; I left—" and then the rest of the sentence died on her lips.

"Come closer," said Harry. "I want to see you. You remind me so much of a girl I once knew."

"Yes," she answered, whilst the warm blood rushed to her face.

"Yes," he repeated, "so much that if I did not know that she was dead I should think I was speaking to Hetty Linton."

"Is she dead, then?" she asked.

"Poor little Hetty," he replied, speaking more to himself than to the girl, who had now advanced near to the chair in which he was seated. "Poor Hetty! if I could only recall the past, I should be a happier man than I am now."

His head was resting on his hand, his thoughts so centred in the past that he had become almost oblivious of the girl's presence until a movement on her part aroused him from his reverie, when, on turning to where she stood, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The white mob cap which had surmounted her smooth black hair was on the floor, whilst the latter in natural profusion fell over her neck and shoulders, clustering in dainty curls from the band which had confined them, as though glad to resume their usual style.

"Hetty, is it a dream?" Harry cried, reaching until, in encircling the girl's wrist he could assure himself that she was in the flesh. "Was it not you, then, whose body I recognised in the parish dead-house, and which I afterwards had buried?"

"I don't know what you mean," she replied; "but I am Hetty Linton. Forgive me, Harry, for the part I have played, but I thought you had forsaken me. I called here when you were away; I wrote, but no answer came, until driven to the verge of madness by

what I considered as your cruelty to me, and the sneers that even my mother threw at me, I determined to hide myself from all those I ever knew. With the remainder of the money you had given me I took lodgings near here, with the hope that, unknown to you, I might still have the happiness of again seeing you. It was then, on calling at Mrs. Curtis's one morning, to whom I had stated my desire to obtain some employment, that I heard of your illness, when disguising myself as I best could I saw Mrs. Bouncer, and you know with what result."

"And she never recognised you?" asked Harry.

"At one time," replied Hetty, "I feared she would do so; but although she seemed to remember something in connection with me she failed to know what it was, and grew weary at last of worrying her brains further about it."

"Thank Heaven!" replied Harry, fervently, "that you are alive, Hetty, and that it has spared my life that I may make atonement for the past."

"And you do love me?" Hetty asked.

"Never until I saw that dead face so like your own did I know that I really loved you;" and then he told her of that sad journey which he and Mrs. Linton took to gaze on what they supposed to be was her own remains.

"But tell me, Harry," she asked, whilst nestling closer to his side, knowing more happiness in these moments of their reunion than in all the wild fancy of their former love, "who is the Queenie of whom you raved?"

"Queenie," he repeated, with a start, "is a married woman, the wife of Sir Anthony Tyford, and the baby-love of my boyhood days. You are not jealous now, Hetty, are you?" he asked.

"And was she very dear to you?"

"She was," he answered, in reply to her question; "but the love I gave Queenie was as the madness of a dream, for she was as far from me, little one, as the moon in the heavens. We are all a little mad at times, you know," and he smiled sadly. "That was the point on which I was not entirely sane. But, thank Heaven, I have recovered my senses now," he added, "and no love but yours, darling, will ever find a place in my heart."

"Oh! I am so happy, Harry," she cried, clasping her arms around his neck, but as the thoughts of what Mrs. Bouncer would think recurred to her mind, "I had better go now," she added.

"Yes," Harry answered, "to your mother's, Hetty, where I will rejoin you later on," when, once more kissing the face he had never thought to see again in this life, Harry assisted her in once more assuming the disguise she had previously worn, after which she was soon on her way to Lupus-street.

For some time after her departure Harry remained deep in thought. He had heard Mrs. Bouncer questioning her as to how she had got on with the master, and Hetty's reply, that her services not being required any longer, she was going home. After which there were sounds of an affectionate parting between the pair, and then the patter of the girl's heels on the stairs as she went out into the street.

Unconscious of the cold, giving colour to the noses of those she met, whilst their countenances in every other respect were white and pinched, Hetty tripped along with that great happiness in her heart which made sunshine on all surrounding her.

She only stayed a few moments at her late lodgings to rearrange her hair and dress before proceeding to her mother's house; and the gloom of the winter's day was fast merging into evening when she arrived at Lupus-street.

A new servant answered the door, so that she was, so far, saved the meeting with a familiar face. But as, in reply to her gentle tap at Mrs. Linton's, the well-known voice bid

her enter, she felt her heart thump, thump with the excitement she could not restrain.

The former was seated with her back to the door, but turning partly round as Hetty entered, a deathly pallor overspread her countenance, when starting from her chair,—

"Who are you?" she almost screamed.
 "Hetty, mother, dear mother, your own Hetty! Tell me you know me!" she cried, whilst throwing herself at her mother's feet; but Mrs. Linton, falling back in the seat she so lately occupied, would have pushed her from her.

"No, no," she faintly uttered; "Hetty is dead, dead!"

And then she closed her eyes, as though to shut out the sight of that other white face, on which she had gazed as that of her own daughter, when suddenly the hand with which she had repulsed the weeping girl fell motionless by her side, as a double knock resounded on the street door.

"What is it, Hetty?" Harry asked, when the former, with streaming eyes, rushed to meet him on his entering the apartment.

"Oh! come here, come here!" she cried.

"My poor mother! see I have killed her."

And she led him to where Mrs. Linton still remained.

"Let a doctor be summoned immediately," said Harry, when placing his hand on the still heart, whose pulsations had ceased for ever, his worst fears were confirmed; and on the landlady entering the room he told her how matters stood.

"Ah! poor lady!" the latter replied, "she has been ailing ever since"—and she gave a sceptical look towards Hetty—"the funeral, you know, sir; and the doctor said only yesterday it was but a question of weeks."

A few moments later the latter arrived, when Hetty, through her sobs, related to him how she had returned to the mother who had supposed her dead, whilst condemning herself in bitter accents for the hand she had had in bringing her illness to its fatal crisis.

"You must not take it to heart like that, my dear girl!" the doctor replied. "Your mother could not have lived another month, and you have the consolation left you that she died without a pang of suffering; but you must come away now, or we shall have you ill," and gently disengaging her from the lifeless clay over which she still lingered, he confided her to the care of Harry.

NOTWITHSTANDING that Mrs. Linton's death in a measure delayed the union between Harry and the daughter of the dead woman, still there were other circumstances which deemed it necessary that the time which had already passed should not be prolonged, and as it was urged by the former that their marriage should take place without further delay, the final arrangements were speedily made.

That it should be a quiet affair was agreed on by both, the landlady's daughter alone accompanying Hetty as bridesmaid, being a proposition decided on by each, whilst Harry determined on inviting his old friend Hartree to be present at the ceremony; and Fred was not a little surprised when a few weeks later he received a letter from the same to say that he required his presence in town on important business, affecting the happiness of his whole life.

"What is he up to now?" the former queried. "I shouldn't be surprised if he were going to get married, after all."

And in his heart Fred even hoped that it might be so, for much as he longed to have invited Harry to Baxton, he feared again by so doing to imperil the happiness of Queenie, not that he need have had any doubts on that score now; for since those August days, in which his beloved sister had battled against a fancied love, a new tie had been added to bind her nearer to her husband—a little mite of humanity, but one all sufficient to link them closer to each other.

"I am so glad you are come, Fred," said

Harry, as in reply to his summons the former lost no time in presenting himself at his chambers, and he shook his friend's hand with the old cheery grasp Fred understood so well.

"What is in the wind now?" he asked, when the former at last released him.

"Going to be married?"

"The very thing," was the reply; "but you will never guess to whom."

"Not very likely," answered Fred, "never having seen the lady."

"Yes, you have," said Harry, and then, in answer to the other's puzzled expression, he told him all about Hetty and the rôle she played when, disguised as a nurse, she tended him through his painful illness, never wearying of administering to his wants, and bearing with him in his impatience.

"And when is it to be?" asked Fred, after having listened to Harry's narrative respecting how he first became acquainted with his future wife, how she was then through her industry supporting her mother, the widow of an officer, who had left her penniless, and how through his villainy (for Harry, when stating the facts, would call his conduct by no other name) she had left her home, believing him to have forsaken her in her trouble, going on to the time when he had believed her to have destroyed herself rather than face the world in her shame and disgrace.

And so on the day named a quiet party might be seen emerging from a church in the vicinity, as the bells rang out a merry peal; and leaning on the arm of Harry, Hetty looked up into his face with such a happy love-light in her eyes, as the sun shone out gloriously upon them in their new-born happiness.

Ten years have passed since then, yet never have either regretted that day on which they gave their lives to each other, whilst the voices of merry children recall to their minds the days of their own happy youth.

[THE END.]

THAT CARVED INKSTAND.

WHEN Benson Stevens went home from his father's office that afternoon—Stevens and Gosse were well-known solicitors—he saw Carrie Kinsler sitting in the parlour-window.

The window looked attractive from the outside, with its double curtains, its palm on a fancy stand, and its glimpse of a blue plush chairback, against which Carrie Kinsler's light hair, and grey-eyed and pink-cheeked face, looked especially well.

There might possibly have been some premeditation in Miss Kinsler's being in the window, in the most becoming chair, at precisely the hour at which Benson Stevens might be expected to pass, on his way home from the office.

But it was no more suspicious a circumstance than the fact of Benson Stevens' passing that way at all, since his shortest route lay in quite another direction—a direction he was never known to take.

He returned her smiling nod with a good deal of effusion, hesitated a moment, and then turned in at the gate with an air of not having purposed it in the least, and of intending to stay only a minute.

The young lady opened the hall door before he could pull the bell.

"I didn't want you to ring," she explained, sweetly, as he hung his overcoat on the rack, "because mamma is rocking Pet to sleep upstairs, and I was afraid it might wake him up."

"Have you got Pet here?" said Benson, following her into the parlour.

"Yes. Aren't you awfully cold? Come up to the fire; and don't take that chair," as he sat down on a stiff little gilded affair. "It's horribly uncomfortable. Take the big one—that's it."

"Yes, we've got Pet her for a week," she pursued, when they were settled down comfortably before the fender. "Howard and Lizzie went to see Lizzie's people in Grafton, and they thought it was too cold for Pet to go, so they left him with us. You can't imagine how perfectly sweet he is!"

Benson was ready to admit that Pet's sweetness was infinitely beyond his comprehension; but it might have been because Pet—properly, little Charles Pelham Kinsler—was the nephew of his pretty hostess, and not on account of any extraordinary merits in Pet himself.

"Oh, dear, yes," Carrie continued, softly, "he's too cunning for anything! Papa could hardly tear himself away from the house this morning, and mamma just devotes herself to him."

She started to replenish the fire from the little brass scuttle, and Benson sprang to her aid. A small parcel fell from his pocket.

"Something that took my fancy in a window in the town," he said, picking it up and untying it.

It was one of the many modern designs in inkstands—a small wheel-barrow with a barrel thereon, the two handles being for a pen-rest and the barrel for ink, the whole neatly carved in white wood.

"Dear me, how clever!" Carrie cried, turning it about admiringly.

"Keep it," said the young man, somewhat timidly.

Carrie raised her eyes to his in a pleased way, and they both flushed a little.

He had never made her a present before. He had sent her elaborate Christmas, New Year's, Easter, and birthday cards, and this year he had ventured to send her a deeply-sentimental valentine, bristling with affection; but this seemed different. It seemed to them both, now it was done, to have been a great deal.

"Thank you so much!" she murmured.

Benson looked at her intently, and drew his chair a little closer, bending towards her. There is no knowing what might have happened if the door had not opened at that moment to admit Pet.

Pet wore an air of defiance. His head, with its long, yellow curls, was well up, and his hand was thrust in a threatening way into the pocket of his short white flannel dress. He climbed into Carrie's lap without remark.

"Why, I thought you were asleep, dear!" she said, holding his small hands to the blaze.

"I wouldn't go," said Pet, calmly.

"Why, dovey?" said his aunt, in faint remonstrance. (Pet was never remonstrated with seriously.) "Don't you remember Mr. Stevens?" Carrie went on, somewhat entreatingly.

Pet did not appear to be in a mood favourable to showing off.

"Tell the gentleman how old you are, darling," she continued, Pet having refused to search his memory for recollections of Mr. Stevens.

"Free weeks," was Pet's response.

"He's nearly four years, but he never says so; he says something different every time," Carrie explained, as though it were an additional proof of Pet's sagacity. "Oh, must you go?" as Benson, feeling himself superseded, rose unwillingly. "You must come in again. And thank you so much for that lovely little inkstand!"

The inkstand, after being duly admired by the family was carried upstairs into the fair recipient's room, and put in a place of honour on a dressing table already gay with a cover of "darned net" over pink silk, a plush-framed mirror, a variety of glove and handkerchief boxes, several cologne-bottles, and a tiny, beribboned work-basket, which, it is needless to say, had never been put to any manner of use.

Carrie sat here the next day, deep in a book by the window.

Pet sat on the floor. Scattered about him, in a wide circle, were a set of blocks, a drum,

a whistle, a woollen sheep, a flannel donkey, three picture-books, an indiarubber doll, and a tin engine.

But Pet, having sucked the doll and broken the leg off the sheep, had no further use for them.

He wanted something fresh—something novel—and his round, blue eyes, roving about the room in search of it, fixed upon the little wheelbarrow inkstand as the most promising object.

He had never seen anything like it, and it looked as though it might be a very good thing to play with.

He got up and went over to the dressing-table.

Carrie glanced up from her book, with her finger on the place at which she had left off.

"Oh, Pet!" she said, gently, "you mustn't touch anything. You won't, will you?"

"I want dat!" Pet responded, pointing a small finger at the inkstand.

"Oh, darling," said his aunt, appealingly, "not that. Won't something else do? Won't—"

But Pet was apparently convinced that nothing else would do. He resorted to a means which he had never known to fail in similar cases.

He lay flat down on the floor with a little squeal of displeasure, and pounded his heels up and down with energy.

"Why, Pet!" Carrie murmured, in tender reproof.

Then her eyes wandered back to her book, and she became gradually re-absorbed—it being the point at which the hero clasped the heroine passionately in his arms and covered her with a thousand fond caresses.

Carrie always read those passages—they seemed to occur in all the novels—with increased interest and a sympathetic thrill.

She was sometimes led to revise the scene, in a musing way, by substituting herself and somebody else in place of the hero and heroine. Somebody else, strangely enough, was always Benson Stevens.

She was roused—just as the irate parent of the heroine burst fiercely into the room—by the snapping together of the front gate.

"There, Pet," she said, looking out, "there's little Mabel Gosse and her mamma! She's come to play with us. How nice! Run downstairs, dear, and take your doll and your engine to show her."

Pet had been standing close to the dressing-table, but he started downstairs in unwontedly brisk obedience.

He did not stop for his doll and his engine; he was giving all his attention to a suspicious-looking lump in the folds of his sash.

He went out of the room in a sideways manner, in order that this lump might not be observed.

Benson Stevens called at the Gosses that evening, with his father.

Mr. Stevens had called chiefly to talk over a matter of business with his partner; but Mrs. Gosse, a plump, pretty woman, playfully interfered when Benson showed a disposition to join in the discussion.

"Don't!" she pleaded. "What is going to become of me? Come to the other end of the room, this minute, and entertain me. What's the use of being a good-looking young man if you are not to make yourself agreeable?" she added, with the familiar banter of a privileged matron.

Benson was not sorry to sit down on the sofa beside her and listen to her pleasant chatter; she was a mistress of small-talk.

"Where do you keep yourself?" she began. "Oh, you needn't trump up any excuses for your shocking neglect of me! I know—I've heard! I've been told all about your deep devotion to a certain young lady—I was there this afternoon, by the way."

"Where?" began Benson, with a fimsy affectation of innocence.

But Mrs. Gosse tapped him on the arm reprovingly.

"You bad boy!" she said; "when the whole town knows it! Why—"

She stopped in her turn.

"What is the matter?" she said.

Benson was staring, open-mouthed, at a little article on the table. It was an inkstand, carved in white wood, and representing a wheelbarrow containing a barrel.

"Where did you— I beg your pardon! but, really, where did you get it, Mrs. Gosse?" he said, indicating it.

He felt nothing as yet but an extreme surprise.

"That?" said Mrs. Gosse, musingly. "Oh, yes! I took Mabel with me this afternoon, and that is something the children had, playing with. Mrs. Kinsler has her little grandson with her, you know. They were playing shops. I suppose that was one of Mabel's purchases. I didn't notice that she was bringing it home till we got here." She went over to the table to look at it. "Why, it's quite a pretty piece of carving!—an inkstand, isn't it? I must send it back immediately. Why did you ask about it?" she added.

Benson turned red.

"Oh, I thought," he stammered—"I thought it rather pretty—rather unique."

His astonishment had given way to a sharp pang of wounded feeling, and of indignation. If he had been a girl, or considerably younger, he would have cried from vexation and hurt pride.

As it was, he sat with a flushed face, staring at the carpet and biting his lips, and trying to listen to Mrs. Gosse as she talked on pleasantly.

He was thinking, bitterly enough, of Miss Kinsler—he called her Miss Kinsler, in the strength of his indignation.

Of course, he understood perfectly that she was exceedingly fond of her little nephew; but certainly she might have given him something else to play with beside that inkstand.

How much could she have cared for it? Not at all, plainly. It was a thing that would break. She could have expected nothing else when she gave it to Pet. Pet—Benson suddenly decided that that was the silliest nickname they could possibly have invented. She could have expected nothing else than it would come back to her broken in pieces, if it ever came back at all. Probably she had not cared whether it did or not.

Of course, he reflected, while Mrs. Gosse chatted on complacently—of course, he hadn't expected her to value it for itself; it wasn't very valuable. But he had hoped that she would care for it a little because—because he had given it to her.

He had fancied her putting it carefully away among her best treasures—and he had fondly imagined that the numerous bright-coloured, silk-fringed cards he had sent her might be among those treasures—and only using it on great occasions, and grudgingly then. But, bah! she hadn't given it a second thought, evidently; and as for the cards, she had probably burned them up long ago.

Very well! Benson told himself that he was glad he had found it out; it was a thousand times better than to have gone on idiotically believing that she had really cared for him a little. Now he could act accordingly; and act he would!

But he was not uproariously happy when he had come to that conclusion.

He went out of town a day or two after, on business for his father. He did not go to bid Carrie Kinsler good-bye, and he did not call when he came back at the end of a week.

He stayed away for a month. Then he found a note on his desk one morning, whose sender he knew by instinct. His heart beat faster as he opened it.

It was a very brief and non-committal note. It said,—

"DEAR MR. STEVENS,—Can you come up this evening for a few minutes?"

"Yours sincerely" had been written and

crossed out; and "Carrie Kinsler" was signed in rather a shaky hand.

Benson tried to go to work as usual, but he was unable to. He had slipped the note into an inner pocket, and it crackled whenever he moved, and kept itself before him.

He found himself growing more and more averse to waiting till evening to solve its contents, and it was only half-past eleven when he went up the Kinslers' front walk and rang the bell.

He caught a glimpse of a blonde face in the parlour-window, against a blue-plush background, but it vanished.

When he was shown into the room Miss Kinsler was standing at the extreme further end of it.

"I—didn't expect you so soon," she said.

But something in her manner—or perhaps it was her pretty morning-dress and careful toilet—intimated that she had.

Then she went on, bravely,—

"I shall be so sorry I troubled you if I am mistaken, but I thought—that perhaps—that it was on account of that inkstand that you have been staying away so?"

He did not laugh at her abruptness.

"It was," he said, soberly.

"You saw it at the Gosses'?" she said, eagerly.

Benson nodded. He began somehow to feel rather ashamed of himself.

"And you thought I had given it to Pet to play with?" she went on, looking at him with wide blue eyes. "Oh, no! oh, no!" She came a step nearer, in her earnestness. "He took it; I don't know how, I didn't see him. I never would have let him have it. And little Mabel Gosse took it home, and it was sent back the next day, and put away in the storeroom by somebody without being undone. I found it there yesterday, with Mrs. Gosse's note tied up in it, and I thought that maybe you—that maybe it was that—"

Her voice had been getting more and more unmanageable. She broke down at that point, and sank down on a chair, in a storm of tears.

Benson stood staring at her helplessly for a moment; then he crossed the room, and Carrie found herself suddenly transposed from an ordinary existence into the heart of a novel, and with the proper person for the hero; only, in this case, there was no irate parent to burst into the room, running over with vengeance.

Their course of true love did run on thereafter with the utmost smoothness, and ended in a happy marriage.

E. A. O.

HOW TO PREVENT WRINKLES.—Women naturally dread the appearance of wrinkles, which give an appearance of age. They usually come on as people get older, or as a consequence of using large quantities of powder, a habit remarkably offensive to men, whatever foolish women may think of it. A little powder to prevent chafing in cold weather, or after washing when the face or neck have been exposed to the sun, is a very different thing. Just a dust of powder immediately wiped off temporarily removes a greasy look; but it stands to reason that a lavish use of it fills up the pores of the skin and so permanently injures the complexion. Wrinkles are very much under personal control. A girl or a youth who indulges in a perpetual knitting of the brows produces a very ugly wrinkle between the eyebrows, but this may be entirely removed by forsaking the trick. A habit of half-closing the eyes—very common with near-sighted persons who do not choose to wear glasses—produces wrinkles at the outer corners. An ill-tempered dropping of the corners of the mouth brings wrinkles in those positions. No outward application will ever cure this; the effort much come from strong determination and resolute avoidance of the cause that produces the ugly effect.

FACETIÆ.

DRYDEN WIDOW (at evening party): "Do you understand the language of flowers, Dr. Crusty?" **Dr. Crusty** (an old bachelor): "No, ma'am." **Widow**: "You don't know if yellow means jealousy?" **Dr. Crusty**: "No, ma'am. Yellow means biliousness."

He wished he had said it differently. **Patient**: "Oh, doctor, you don't know how it worries me to think that I might be buried alive." **Doctor**: "Calm yourself, Mrs. B. You need have no fear of anything like that. Trust to me, and I assure you that you are in no danger."

A girl's heart will palpitate, and her breath come short and quick, at the very thought of getting up to recite a verse in the Sunday-school concert, but she will sit calmly up in the choir and flirt with the handsome tenor all through the service, in the face of the whole congregation, without experiencing a single tremor.

"Ah!" exclaimed Fogg, looking up from his newspaper, "another clergyman come to grief." "What's that?" exclaimed half a dozen eager voices. "How did it happen?" "It was at a funeral," replied Fogg. And everybody ejaculated, "Pooh!"

CONOVER (to young widow whose husband has just been drowned): "Don't you think, ma'am, it might do for us to try and raise the body with a cannon? You know that constant firing over the river seldom fails to raise the body." **Young Widow**: "Constant firing! Oh, dear, no, John would never like that! He was always distracted by noise of any kind."

MR. JONES (who weighs 220 pounds): "It's raining cats and dogs, Miss Jackson. I hope you have goloshes with you." **Miss Jackson** (who weighs ninety-five pounds): "No, I haven't, and I shall have to walk quite a distance." **Mr. Jones**: "I'll lend you mine; and you could have my ulster, too, if it wasn't too large."

HE SAW HER HOME.—He is a young man well known about town, and a vocalist. Recently he joined a church choir, and one evening after practice asked to see one of the lady singers home. She shyly gave her consent, and they started. He walked by her side for two or three hours, talking nonsense, and began to tire. He then asked: "How much farther do you live?" "Oh, we've got about half way," she replied. Two or three times he had to sit down to rest, and at last he got her home. When he got back to his roosting-place it was half-past four o'clock the next morning. Someone else will see that young lady home next practice night.

HOW WARS BEGIN.

"Papa, how do nations get into war with each other?" asked Tommy Seasonby.

"Sometimes one way, sometimes another," said the father. "Now, there are Germany and Spain—they came near getting into war because a Spanish mob took down the German flag."

"No, my dear," put in Mrs. Seasonby; "that wasn't the reason."

"But, my darling," said Mr. Seasonby, "don't you suppose I know? You are mistaken; that was the reason."

"No, dearie; you are mistaken. It was because the Germans—"

"Mrs. Seasonby, I say it was because—"

"John, you know better! You are trying to—"

"Madam, I am not aware that your opinion was asked in this matter."

"Well, I don't want my boy instructed by an old ignoramus."

"See here, you impudent—"

"Don't you dare bristle up to me, you old—"

"Never mind," interrupted Tommy; "I fancy I know how wars begin."

PLAINTIVE.—Upon a modest gravestone in a cemetery appears the plaintive legend: "His neighbour played the cornet."

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL superintendent says that what is wanted in his line is some one who can address a Sunday-school without beginning his speech "when I was a little boy."

"Why is violin playing such a favorite accomplishment with young ladies?" asked a gentleman of his partner in a dance, who replied: "Oh! I suppose it's because a girl always likes to get a bean on a string."

It is probable that the young lady who aspires to be admitted to the ranks of the legal profession does not reflect that the gratification of her ambition would only make her a bar-maid.

VISITOR: "What brought you to this place, my friend?" **Convict**: "Sneezing, sir." **Visitor**: "Sneezing, did you say?" **Convict**: "Yes, sir. It woke the gentleman up, an' he nabbed me, sir. Have you got a bit of tobacco about you, sir?"

"Well, Joe, they say you are going to be married?" "Yes, I am." "Failed in business last week, didn't you?" "Yes, I did." "Lost everything?" "Yes, I did lose everything." "Should think it would be a rather inopportune time to get married." "But I must support myself some way, you know."

A DAME.—Student (to his professor): "In bringing my theme over, Professor, I got it wet, as I had no umbrella. Do you want me to recopy it?" Professor G. (something of a wag): "Oh, no, not at all. I daresay I shall find it dry enough when I read it."

A MAN stopped at the house of a settler to get a drink of water. He found him sitting in the shade, while another man was working near by. "I shouldn't think you would need to keep a man on your small farm?" the traveller said. "Oh, I don't need to; I keep him so's to have somebody to boss around." "I should think it would be cheaper to let the man go and boss your wife." "Stranger," replied the settler, solemnly, "you don't know Sary—'d be necessary to have a company of the regular army here all the time if I wanted ter see any of my bossin' carried out."—*American Paper.*

THE PATRIDGE.

The partridge is a kind of wild hen, and they live in the swamps, and on the hill sides that are woody.

They are very easy to catch with the hand, if you can get near enough to throw them salt on their tale; but this is always difficult for beginners.

In the spring of the year they will drum a tune with their wings on some deserted old log, and if you draw nigh to them you observe the music, they will rise up, and knit a hole thru the air with a hum like a bullet.

There is no bird can beat a partridge on the wing for one hundred yards; I am authorized to say so on this.

The partridge are a game bird, and are shot on the wing, if they are not missed.

It is dreadful natural to miss a partridge on the fly, especially if a tree gets in the way.

I have hunted a grate deal for partridge, and lost a grate deal of time at it.

The partridge lays 14 eggs, and a tew hatch all her eggs out as a cockroach iz who feeds well.

When a brood of young partridges first begin to toddle about with the old bird, they look like a lot of last year's chestnut burrs on legs.

Broiled partridge iz good if you can git one that waz born during the present century, but there iz a grate menny partridge around that waz with Noah in the ark, and they are az tuff to git the meat oph ov az a hoss shu.

But broiled partridge iz better than broiled krow, and I had rather hav broiled krow than broiled mule just for a change.

JOHN BILLINGS.

When is a house not worth a shilling? When it is worth less (worthless).

LAWYER (to witness, sharply): "What did the prisoner do next?" **Witness** (hesitatingly): "I think—." **Lawyer**: "Stop there; you are not to say what you think." **Witness**: "That's lucky for you; you might hear something you wouldn't consider flattering."

A BOASTER in an hotel was telling of the many parts of country that he had visited. A man at his elbow asked: "Have you ever been in Algebra?" "Oh, yes," said the boaster. "I passed through there on the top of a stage-coach about a year ago."

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (to little boy who is buying sweets): "My young friend, don't you think that, instead of spending all the pennies you get, it would be better to put some of them away for a rainy day?" Little boy: "Naw. What's the good of money on a rainy day? Ma never lets me stir out of the house."

An aged rich lady, who was in the habit of giving a feast annually to her descendants and relatives, all of whom expected legacies from her, said, on one of the annual gatherings: "What a fine sight it is to see so many branches flourishing from the same root!" "Alas!" exclaimed a graceless nephew, "the branches would flourish far better if the root were under ground!" That nephew didn't get a legacy.

A MEMBER of the House of Lords who always pronounces Derby Darby, Berkshire Berkshire, &c., was interrupted in his speech on a recent occasion by the barking of a dog that had somehow got into the gallery, whereupon "the noble lord" exclaimed: "To what new species of opposition am I now to be subjected?" "It is only a member from Berkshire!" responded a witty duke.

HIS IDEA OF STOPPING.—"Well, my man," said a military doctor to a patient who had been on "low diet" for a long time, "how are you?" "Much better, sir." "Could you eat a small chicken to-day?" "That I could, sir." "What would you like it stuffed with?" "Please, your honour," replied the hungry patient, "I would like it stuffed with another chicken."

MRS. A.: "I was reading to-day about the dreadful slaughter of our song-birds. One case was where seventy-five thousand were killed. Isn't it dreadful?" **Mrs. E.**: "It is, indeed. What did they kill them for?" **Mrs. A.**: "The paper says they were killed to decorate ladies' hats." **Mrs. E.**: "Oh, well, that isn't a great many, after all, considering how many hats there are in the world. But it is really true that the birds are becoming scarce? I'd better lay in a stock before the price goes up. It's almost Whitehead, you know."

"Good-Morning, Cicely, my dear," exclaimed her intimate, as she called in on her way to a shopping tour. "Do go down and help me to select a new spring wrap. Now, that's a good dear!" "Why, now, it really is impossible. You know I helped you select your winter cloak, and you always thought it a horrid thing." True; but this time, you know, I only want to know your judgment, so as to know what not to buy. No woman ever consented to such conditions, and no woman ever will.

INCREASING BENEVOLENCE.—A Doctor of Divinity went over to Scotland, the land of his birth, and soon after his return he preached a sermon on "Giving." He said that liberal giving helped a man in more ways than one. To illustrate his point he presented the case of one of his old friends in Scotland. He was a lawyer who had become rich as well as eminent. "This friend told me," said the doctor, "that one of the causes to which he attributed his success was his habit of giving liberally. He said he had always made a practice of setting aside one-tenth of his income for gifts. And my friends," the doctor spoke with much earnestness, "he assured me that if he had his life to live over again he would increase it to one-twelfth."

SOCIETY.

THE Queen's visit to Liverpool was a great success, and the members of the Royal party received several gifts. There were miniature reproductions in silver of Prince Victor of Hohenlohe's statue of the late Duke of Albany for Her Majesty and Princess Beatrice, a sword of honour for the Duke of Connaught, and a whip for Prince Henry.

THE first meet of the Coaching Club was fairly well attended, in spite of the un congenial weather. The Prince of Wales occupied the box seat on Lord Charles Baresford's coach. The Princess of Wales and her daughters were present to see the start, which did not take place till one o'clock.

ASCOOT, says a contemporary, is to be very gay this season, a large numbers of mansions and residences having been already secured for the race week in the neighbourhood. The Prince of Wales has taken Harewood Lodge, Sunninghill, the residence of Colonel the C. Hay, which will be prepared for the Prince and Princess, who will entertain a distinguished party of visitors. The Duke and Duchess of Connaught will be at Bagshot Park; Prince and Princess Christian at Cumberland Lodge; the Duke and Duchess of Westminster at Cliveden, Maidenhead; and the officers of the 1st Grenadier Guards now in garrison at Windsor will also entertain visitors during the meeting. The Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family will go to Ascot in "Ascot state" on Tuesday and Thursday.

The Queen's Jubilee will be loyally kept in Canada, and the citizens of Toronto propose to erect a statue of Her Majesty in some prominent part of the city to commemorate the anniversary.

THE Queen's representative at the marriage of the Duke of Braganza and Princess Amélie of Orleans was Prince George of Wales. His Royal Highness has, no doubt, had a jolly time of it, for he knows thoroughly well how to enjoy himself.

PRINCESS Amélie's wedding dress was of heavy white silk, with a very long train. It was pretty well devoid of all trimming except a *ruche* round the edge. The bridal veil was that worn by the Princess's mother upon her marriage with the Comte de Paris. The travelling dress was of pale blue *moiré antique*, trimmed round the edge of the skirt with a flounce of white lace. The bodice had a blouse of soft twilled silk, and confined at the waist by a blue sash, which was fastened behind in a big bow and ends. The hat matched the dress and was trimmed with white bugles and blush roses. *Parasol en suite.*

A STYLISH wedding was that at St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, when the marriage, by special licence, of Mr. Francis M. H. Sandford (Grenadier Guards) with Constance Georgina, elder daughter of Mr. William G. Craven, and sister of the Countess of March, took place. The bride wore a dress of white satin duchesse, the long ample train being quite plain, and the petticoat veiled with Brussels lace; a tulle veil, and full wreath of orange blossoms.

The bridesmaids' costumes were of white Sarah rapé, the fronts of the skirts being of Valenciennes lace, and the bodices having full vests to match. They had high straw hats, with a very broad band of white velvet round the crown, and the brim turned up with the same, trimmed with cherry-coloured tips and osprey, and carried bouquets of pink and white flowers.

By the kindness of the proprietor and directors of the Japanese village an evening fête of an unusually interesting character will shortly be given in aid of the funds of the United Kingdom Beneficent Society, under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen and their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, &c.

STATISTICS.

GAS HOLDERS.—The famous South Metropolitan Station gasholder, of London, 214 feet in diameter, over 150 feet high, and 5,500,000 cubic feet capacity, long held its position as the largest in the world. It has now been eclipsed by a pair of holders erected recently at the Birmingham Corporation Gasworks. Each of these is contained in a tank of 240 feet in diameter, is said to be 150 feet high, and to hold 6,400,000 cubic feet.

BRICK WALLS.—Walls laid up of good, hard-burned bricks, in mortar composed of good lime and sharp sand, will resist a pressure of 150 pounds per square inch, or 216,000 pounds per square foot, at which figures it would require 1,600 feet high of 12-inch wall to crush the bottom courses, allowing 135 pounds as the weight of each cubic foot. Walls laid up in same quality of brick and mortar, with one-third Portland cement added, will resist 2,500 pounds per square inch, or 360,000 pounds per square foot, which would require a height of wall of 2,700 feet to crush the bottom bricks.

GEMS.

Be patient in little things. Learn to bear the everyday trials and annoyances of life quietly and calmly, and then when unforeseen trouble or calamity comes, your strength will not forsake you.

A SYMPATHISING heart is as a spring of pure water bursting forth from the mountain side. Ever pure and sweet in itself, it carries gladness and joy on every ripple of its sparkling current.

THE best recipe for going through life in a commendable way is to feel that each one needs all the kindness he can get from others in the world.

To be perpetually longing and impatiently desirous of anything, so that a man cannot abstain from it, is to lose a man's liberty, and to become a servant to meat and drink, or smoke.

Who can set bounds to the possibilities of a man? Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator of the infinite.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE MINCEMEAT.—One pound tart apples, one pound currants, one pound suet, one pound brown sugar, one-fourth pound raisins, four oranges, two lemons, one teaspoonful ground allspice, one teaspoonful ground mace, one wineglassful brandy. Peel and mince the apples, chop the suet fine, stone the raisins and cut them in halves, pick and wash the currants, squeeze and strain the juice of the oranges and lemons (chopping up the rind of one of the lemons), and mix the ingredients together with the sugar, adding the spices and the brandy. When all are thoroughly mixed, cover closely and keep in a cool place.

INTAILED YEAST TOAST.—Rub a quarter of a pound of butter into two pounds of flour. Add to this two ounces of moist sugar, three well-beaten eggs and one quart of warm milk, in which half-an-ounce of German yeast has been dissolved. Mix the whole well together, and let it rise for an hour. Put it into a buttered, oblong bread tin, and again let it stand for half-an-hour on the shelf over the range. Then bake it in a moderately hot oven. Next day cut the cake with a sharp carving-knife into slices half-an-inch thick, and dry them in a quick oven till they are of a light brown. Keep them in a tin. They may be eaten hot or cold, and are nice dipped in tea.

MISCELLANEOUS.

REMEMBER that your children will inherit your tastes, folies and sins; that what you are, they probably will be. The appetites you indulge will be strong in them, and will either overcome them or cause them a lifetime of bitter struggle. A fearful heritage to innocent children is the dishonesty, the weakness, the intemperance, the dissipation of their fathers.

DOING nothing for others is the undoing of one's self. We must be purposely kind and generous or we miss the best part of existence. The heart that goes out of itself gets large and full of joy. This is the great secret of the inner life. We do ourselves the most good doing something for others.

EXPERIENCE keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarcely in that; for it is true we may give advice, but we cannot give conduct. Remember this; they that will not be counselled cannot be helped. If you do not hear to reason, she will rap your knuckles.

LEARNING and life, that which is known in the world and that which is to be done in the world, stand over against each other, and the perpetual problem is how shall they be brought together. Like two strong men who gaze into each other's eyes, and know that they ought to be standing hand in hand; like two great promontories which stand and watch each other, and feel the sea which runs between, and yet feel under the seas the sweep of the continuous earth that makes them one—so learning and life—that which is known upon the earth—stand gazing upon each other, and knowing that, however they may be separated and kept apart, they belong to each other.

THE SPEED OF THE ARAB.—The popular notion about the speed of the Arab courier, says a writer, is confounded. Great speed is not his strong point; the chances are that on any ordinary race-course the best Arab in the world would be beaten by a second-rate English race-horse. These Arabs were not, of course, first-rate specimens of the race, but they were certainly not bad ones. A fortnight or so afterwards, when I was at Tebessa, the commandant showed me an English thoroughbred, which, he said, had easily run away from every Arab he had ever tried him against. But what was far more remarkable about this horse was, that once acclimatised and accustomed to the hard life and fare of the Arab horse, he quite equalled them in hardihood and endurance, as had been proved in the course of many expeditions and tours of inspection among the tribes of the district.

A BLEAK HOME.—On the map of Iceland may be seen a speck of an island called Grimsey. It is the most northern, and consequently the coldest, of the Iceland group. Eighty-eight people, no more, live on it. They have tried to keep a few cows, but the winters are too hard for them. Two horses and a few sheep, with very coarse fleeces, are the only animals of the kind on the island. A minister, whose name is Peter Goodman, lives in this remote place. He is a poet and an astronomer, and is employed to take observations for the meteorological institute at Copenhagen. Once or twice a year some of the islanders visit the mainland; but the stormy seas, covered with icebergs, make the passage always dangerous. On one side of the island, which is a very high precipice, countless birds build their nests, and the collecting of eggs is one of the chief means of living for the settlement. Men are let down over the face of the rocks by ropes. They wear suits thickly wadded with feathers, to save themselves from being hurt on the sharp rocks. Each man carries a pole to help himself with, and a ladle for scooping up nests which he cannot reach with his hands. There is in his frock a great pocket, in which he can put one hundred and fifty eggs. There he works with the sea roaring beneath him.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. J. W.—No stamp is required for a will.
AMY.—Give him up; he is false, and fickle as he is false.

RED, WHITE, AND BLUE.—Yes, and has, *prima facie* very good grounds.

O. L.—The quantity of blood in the body of a healthy man weighing 160 pounds is about 20 pounds.

ETHEL S.—1. Handwriting is fair. Of course daily practice will improve it. 2. and 3. No.

NITA and ELLA.—To give the language of flowers in its entirety would require much more space than we can spare.

A PERPLEXED ONE.—The honourable course, if you love the girl and intend to marry her, and feel that she reciprocates your affection, is to consult her parents.

GRACE DARLING.—All the receipts have been given in recent numbers, and in justice to our other correspondents we must really ask Grace Darling kindly to refer.

LUCY P.—1. It is an ancient custom derived from remote antiquity, the flowers in question being one of the emblems of Venus. 2. We have given the receipts quite recently. 3. Nut brown. 4. Fair writing.

L. W. D.—1. Fifteen-year-old girls should eschew nonsensical ideas regarding love and matrimony, as they are not sufficiently developed, either mentally or physically, to assume the responsibilities of a wife.

D. W.—Unless the gentleman can give positive proof of his not being engaged to the other lady, it would be advisable for you to treat him in a ladylike but distant manner, and not allow him to indulge in any loving words or other familiarities.

E. A. A.—The salamander is a species of lizard. It is harmless, and offers no resistance when captured. There is nothing in the superstition or belief that once prevailed that it has the power of resisting fire, to test which many have been cruelly destroyed.

C. S. W.—1. For waterproofing the article named we know of no reliable recipe. 2. The easiest way to get rid of a wart is to use of the thickened skin which covers it and apply lunar caustic; taking care not to burn the skin of the hand.

M. C. K.—For pimples, the following ointment has been found of benefit: Take of purified lard an ounce and a half; of citron ointment, an ounce and a half; of finest almond oil, half an ounce. Mix all well together. Scent, if desired, with the oil of bergamot.

E. W. N.—The run from Hong-Kong, China, to New York was recently made in eighty-eight days by a sailing vessel—the ship *South American*. The *Kathay*, also a sailing vessel, made the run from Shanghai, China, in ninety-two days; the best time on record.

C. T. M.—Ben Lomond, a mountain of Scotland, rises to a height of 3,192 feet. The view from the summit is described as unsurpassed. The mountain forms the southern extremity of the Grampians or central Scottish highlands.

E. C. S.—To make mace, take six gallons of water, ten pounds of honey, and three eggs—the whites only. Boil one hour; then add a little cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, and a very little rosemary. When cold, add one spoonful of yeast, from the brewer. Stir it well. In twenty-four hours it will be good.

ELLIE.—A spare diet will do much towards improving the skin in many cases. For skin eruptions, stimulate the skin, by washing it with strong soap-suds twice a day, and rubbing briskly with a coarse towel. If a lotion be necessary, try the following: Corrosive sublimate, five grains; coogne two ounces; water, six ounces. This recipe is for external use only.

E. W. J.—1. Correspondents need not expect answers to their queries in less than three weeks, and where a great deal of research is necessary in order to give a satisfactory and accurate reply, more time is very likely to elapse. 2. There is a pretty sentiment embodied in these lines:—

"This album is a reef to thee,
Sacred to love and memory;
May ever, line and sentence be
A pure, bright gem of constancy."

3. No one could see your penmanship without praising it.

R. L. M.—An excellent mixture for a cough or cold is made as follows:—Take one teaspoonful of flaxseed, and let it soak all night. In the morning put into a kettle two quarts of water, one handful of liquorice root (split up), and a quarter of a pound of good raisins (cut in half). Boil them until the strength is thoroughly extracted, and then add the soaked flaxseed. Let all boil half-an-hour more, watching and stirring, that the mixture may not burn. Then strain and add lemon juice and sugar to taste. Take any quantity cold through the day, and, if needed, half a teaspoonful warm at night.

C. H. W.—1. Gold ink is made in the following manner:—Genuine gold-leaf is rubbed with honey on a plate of ground glass by means of a flat pestle, until the whole presents a uniform mass, no distinct particles of gold being visible. This mass is carefully removed in a vessel with water, which dissolves the honey and leaves the gold behind. This operation is repeated until all the saccharine matter has disappeared, and then the remaining gold is mixed with a sufficient

quantity of a solution of gum-arabic, shaken well, and is then ready for use. The writings to be rubbed, when perfectly dry, with a flat piece of ivory, when it will present the lustre of pure gold. Silver ink is made in the same way, with the substitution of silver-leaf. These varieties of ink may be obtained at any artists' colourman's. 2. Transfer powder, used by embroiderers and dressmakers, may be purchased in local shops. The manufacturers will not disclose their methods of making and colouring this compound.

E. M. M.—The colour of hair is caused by a kind of oil which comes from the cells in the bulb, or part under the skin. This oil in red hair is blood-red; in fair hair yellowish, and in dark hair dark brown. Most of the imported hair used for making wigs, curls, beards, moustaches, &c., comes from France, Italy, and Germany. A good deal of coarse hair comes also from Northern Africa.

E. B. R.—1. To find subjects for conversation the period of no one book would be of much aid to you. You would derive some portion of your time to the miscellaneous reading to be found in well-edited papers. 2. To put a polish on cuffs and collars drop a small piece of sperm-candle in the starch while it is boiling.

C. C. F.—To make an arabis lotion, take one ounce of arabis flowers dried, and pat them in a wide-mouthed bottle; pour just enough boiling water on them to moisten them, and afterwards add one and a half pints of spirits of wine. In case of a burn or bruise wet a cloth in the arabis and lay it on the part affected. Renew the application occasionally.

THOUGHTS OF FINE.

As fair Aurora glances through
The veil that hides her tender blush,
The snow-drops fringed with gem of dew
Reflect the morning's rosy flush.
And as the sky-lark greets the day,
Winging his flight in ecstasy,
So, too, my thoughts speed swift away
To re-t, beloved one, on thee!

And when at noon the sun on high
Sails like a ship on azure seas,
The snow-drops droop and faintly sigh,
Unstirred by any wandering breeze.
While Nature seems to rest apart,
Embraced in tender reverie,
Its spell falls on my longing heart,
And weaves their fondest dreams of thee.

Then as the vesper-star stands out,
A silver point within the sky,
The calm of evening falls about:
The land is sweetly serene.
While then the birds on branches their love
Upon the still, encircling air,
I wish that I could bind above
Thy heart, and read what's written there!

When all the glittering star-host comes
Out in the purple dawns above,
My thoughts seek thee, as towards its home
Turns e'er the wandering, exiled dove.
Within my heart thine image dwells,
Resting upon a sacred shrine,
And every thought that fondly swells
That heart, dear love, is wholly thine!

C. T.

M. G.—1. To get the new music printed take it to a publisher and make the requisite arrangements with him. It should be written out in a clear, distinct, correct manner, as the publisher will not be likely to undertake the task of correcting any errors that may occur. Unless the music shows great merit and a probability of proving popular, it will be a difficult matter to find a person willing to bear the expense of issuing it. 2. No method of reducing the size of a person's nose has been discovered up to the present time.

Q. M.—1. *Vergissmeinnicht* is a German word signifying "forget-me-not." 2. One other sentence means "Will you kiss me?" 3. Very dark-brown hair. 4. To gain knowledge that will be of use to you, first read history, using that as the foundation, then take up biography; follow this with standard books of travel, relieving the natural monotony of such heavy subjects by including in some extent in poetical works, alternating with the essays of Lamb, Addison or Macaulay. Then you will find that your mind is stored with interesting and useful material, and will allow of an indulgence in light literature, as novels and the like. 4. Sunday, April 5, 1883. 5. Excellent penmanship. 6. A lady 4 feet 11 inches in height should weigh about 90 or 100 pounds.

D. F. R.—Nature and custom have both ordained that the sterner sex shall assume the task of first declaring love for the objects of their adoration, and consequently it is considered very unbecomingly to reverse this state of affairs. In your case the young man has acted in a very petulant, childish way, and has added to his offence by disliking to give any reason for such foolish conduct. Perhaps you are, in a certain degree, to blame, inasmuch as you have met his advances in such a cool, distant manner. With the majority of sensible lovers, however, this should act as an incentive to greater efforts to gain the affection of the loved one. If no apologies for his rudeness, and again visits you, try to act with a greater degree of cordiality, and then perhaps he will be more positively assured of your love for him.

TERRA INCOGNITA.—To arrest bleeding from the nose, plug the nostrils with the scraping from a fur hat, or with lint, dipped in a strong solution of alum or tannin. In the case of adults it is not always wise to stop the flow of blood very suddenly; for the bleeding may be necessary in full-blooded persons, with richness of face, and subject to headache and dizziness, to ward off apoplexy.

F. F. A.—The word elixir is supposed to be of Arabic origin, applied in old pharmacy to certain extracts obtained in boiling; as elixir of vitrol, &c. In modern pharmacy the name is retained for various tinctures made up of several ingredients. The alchemists applied it to a number of solutions which they employed in the transmutation of metals, and to the *elixir vite*, a preparation which when discovered was to endow the person taking it with immortality.

P. L. M.—1. Explain the circumstances to the lady, and ask her to wait for two or three years until you have placed yourself in better circumstances, and are thus more fitted to support a wife. If it is a case of true love on both sides, the time will pass very quickly. 2. Under the circumstances, the disparity in age on your side—sixteen years—should not deter you in searching for a wife such a model of a woman, although, generally speaking, such marriages are not to be encouraged.

R. S. T.—1. The colour of the hair is light brown. 2. To make starch for linen, cotton, &c., to one ounce of the best starch add just enough soft cold water to make it (by rubbing and stirring) into a thick paste, carefully breaking all the lumps and particles. When rubbed perfectly smooth, add a pint of boiling water (with stirring to suit the fancy), and boil for at least half-an-hour, taking care to stir it well at the time, to prevent its burning. When not stirring, keep it covered, so as to protect it from dust, &c. Also keep it covered when removed from the fire, to prevent a scum from rising on it. To make starch for coloured articles, such as gingham, muslin, and calicoes, dissolve and add to every pint of starch a small piece of alum, which will help to keep the colours bright.

MARA.—It is to be hoped that Manis and Alice will be pleased with the following postcard tributes to their worth and beauty:—

"Maid of a piercing eye, perceptible in keen,
A most dainty manner, yet of noble mien,
Maid without fawning, proud without pretence,
Inimitable wit and rare good sense
Excelling in the heart's manifestation."

"Are the old goddesses now things of earth,
Leaving Olympus for a lower sphere?
If so, then here is one of heavenly birth
Come to our earth; be our adored here—
Eish heart a temple where is hymned her worth."

G. N. A.—Crystallizing consists in depositing a coating of fine crystals of pure sugar upon the surface of the articles selected for the purpose, and it accomplishes two objects: it protects them from the air, enabling them to retain their moisture for a long period, and makes their appearance more attractive. The process is as follows:—No two pounds of sugar add half a pint of water, and boil until the sugar is entirely dissolved and converted into syrup. The articles to be crystallized are placed on wire frames in a tin box and completely covered with the syrup, to which, just before pouring into the box, should be added one ounce of pure alcohol. The whole should be kept at a temperature of about 80 or 85 degrees, and kept undisturbed for twelve hours. Near the end of this period the articles should be carefully examined, and if found sufficiently crystallized, the superfluous syrup should be drained off. The articles are then dried by a gentle heat, and are ready for use. The alcohol is employed to hasten the work of crystallization, which is thus explained:—Water, when cold, will only retain a certain amount of sugar in solution; but if heated, a much larger proportion of sugar may be introduced and kept in solution as long as a high temperature is maintained. When the syrup begins to cool, the particles of sugar, which can no longer be held therein, assume a crystalline form, and are deposited on the articles ready to receive them. Alcohol is not recommended if very fine crystals are desired.

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